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THE SERPENT CITADEL

SERPENT AMPHORA CYCLE
BOOK THREE

AN ADVENTURE SOURCEBOOK FOR 3RD EDITION FANTASY ROLEPLAYING

SCARRED
LANDS

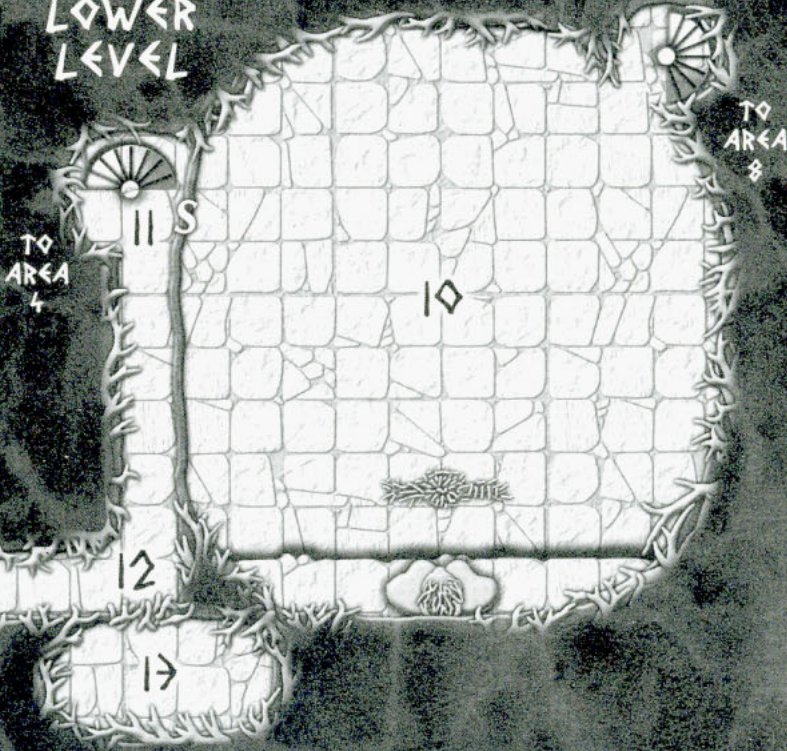
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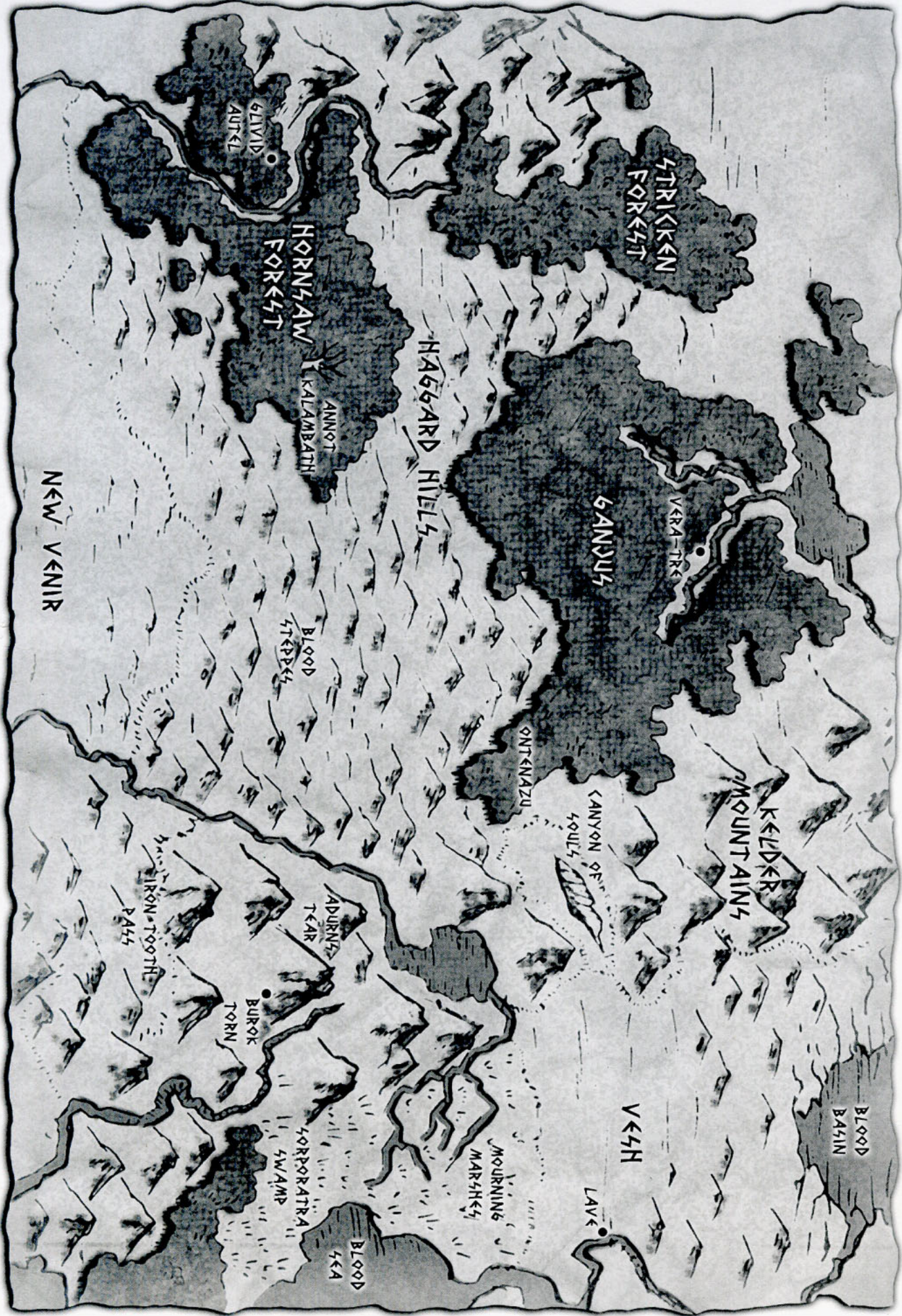
1 SQUARE = 5 FEET

UPPER
LEVEL



LOWER
LEVEL





STRICKEN
FOREST

HORN/SAW
FOREST

HAGGARD
HILLS

GANDUS

NEW VENIR

KELDER
MOUNTAINS

BLOOD
BASIN

GLIVID
AUNTL

ANNOT
KALAMBATH

VRA-TRK

BLOOD
STEPPES

MOUNT
NAZU

CANYON OF
SOULS

IRON-TOOTH
PASS

ADURN/
TEAR

BURK
TORN

SORPORATRA
SWAMP

MOURNING
MARSHES

VESH

LAVE

BLOOD
SEA

THE SERPENT CITADEL™

Credits

Authors:

Ari Marmell & C.A. Suleiman

Developer:

Joseph D. Carriker, Jr.

Editor:

Scott Holden-Jones

Managing Editor:

Andrew Bates

Playtesters:

Jim Sharkey, Jeff Ibach, Dawn Ibach, Royce Groff, and Angelo Sargentini

Art Director:

Mike Chaney

Layout and Typesetting:

Mike Chaney

Cover Artist:

Kieran Yanner

Interior Artists:

Nate Pride

Cartography:

Ed Bouelle



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Apologies

To Jim "The GM" Sharkey, for leaving his name out of the playtesting credits in *The Serpent & the Scepter*. *Mea culpa*, brother-man. We couldn't have done it without you and your team. Take a bow.



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THE SERPENT CITADEL™

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Introduction

The Serpent Coils...

The adventure you hold takes a party of 6th- to 7th-level characters on the final leg of a quest to destroy the Serpent Amphora, a foul artifact of the Witch Queen Mormo. The artifact's story began in **The Serpent Amphora** (available for free download at www.swordsofceremony.com), and continued in **Serpent in the Fold** and **The Serpent & the Scepter**. It reaches its exciting conclusion in this, **The Serpent Citadel**.

What Has Gone Before

Serpent in the Fold

The first adventure of the Serpent Amphora Cycle, for 3rd- to 4th-level characters, introduced the characters to the Serpent Amphora and the machinations of the servitors of Mormo. It was then that they learned of its true power, and of the existence of those who would harness that power to resurrect their fallen titan queen. At the conclusion of the adventure, the heroes helped prevent the theft of the Amphora in Vesh at the hands of a traitor within the Vigils' midst. If the characters did not play through **Serpent in the Fold**, its salient points will likely be relayed to them in Vesh by Commander Durn.

But even Durn does not know the whole story.

In the darkest reaches of Khet, deep in the thickest forest, dwells the creature Ilkuthsra, called by some the Autumn King. Those who have seen him say that his visage is that of a flesh-barren, dried skull, scribed with serpentine, twisted knotwork.

Ilkuthsra is known to be a druid of immense power, but few can testify to his true identity. Ilkuthsra is too old to be mortal, and even the other druids of Khet remain befuddled by their hoary patron. Most believe he is a lich, or perhaps some other unique form of undead. Others believe him to be a dark creature of the fey, the likes of which has not been seen since well before the Titanswar. Even to his fellow dark druids, the Autumn King is an enigma in deed as well as in form; he seems to share their goals, yet he spends as much time working toward his own ends as he does cooperating with them. He commands his own faction of the cannibal druids called the Bringers of Autumn, yet even they are ignorant of his true ambitions.

Ilkuthsra has been observing the party for some time. For reasons of his own, he is highly interested in what they've done and what they continue to do. More strange still (for all that the party opposes the stated goals of the Cannibals of Khet), Ilkuthsra seems to want them to succeed! During the events of **Serpent in the Fold**, the Autumn King subtly (and

The Serpent Amphora

Very little is capable of harming the Serpent Amphora. There is little need of game statistics for this vessel — its hardness is not quantifiable in mortal terms and it resists all damaging magic used on it. It does not radiate magic, though to spells that detect the presence of evil, it certainly does detect as such. It also detects as an item of law, however, leading sages who have studied it to conclude that they are in fact detecting the power of Chardun which seals the Amphora rather than any kind of malign influence or power the vessel itself may have.

By the same token, the Amphora does not negate non-damaging magic used on it or against those carrying it. Such spells can be used on it freely; indeed, the *asaatthi* are known to have used tactics involving *grease* and *mage hand* to retrieve it. The vessel is simply unaffected by any powers that would alter its form, whether by transmutation or damage. Sages have theorized that this imperviousness is due to Chardun having imbued it with great powers of stasis — it is forever unchanging, at least by the powers mortals can bring to bear.

sometimes not so subtly) assisted the characters in their search for the Amphora's secrets, and he has monitored their activities ever since, even going so far as to waylay the party's opposition from time to time along the way — all this unbeknownst to the heroes themselves, of course.

None can say why Ilkuthsra would seek to aid the characters, and he certainly isn't one prone to revealing his own secrets in any event. Thus, for now, the Autumn King remains a mystery.

The Serpent & the Scepter

In the second installment of the Serpent Amphora Cycle, the Vigils asked the characters to seek a means of destroying the terrible artifact. Using information found in the Vault of Chardun in the Sky Keep ruins, the PCs were sent to Lageni to discover a True Ritual that would allow them to destroy the Amphora and its contents. On the way, they learned they were being spied upon, and may have even identified the culprits as the Dar al Annot — a fanatical cult of druids and witches in Mormo's service who make their home in the Hornsaw Forest.

At the temple of a High Priest of Chardun, the PCs discovered that the one place in which the ritual was surely recorded was among the works of Marilvaz,

an ancient sage and wizard-priest who served Chardun. Marilvaz died shortly after the Divine War, but then rose up as an undead creature, demanding that the entirety of his works be scribed on the walls of his tomb. Once this was done (including an expansion of his tomb to allow enough wall-space to fulfill his commands), he returned to true and peaceful death.

The heroes entered the tomb and were there set upon by undead guardians and various traps intended by Marilvaz to weed out all but the most worthy. There, they discovered that the Mad Scribe's tomb contained many spells in addition to the ritual they sought — and they learned that the ritual itself was written in the Infernal tongue. During the hours it took to copy the ritual down, a band of Dar al Annot invaded the tomb. After some quick thinking (and no small bit of luck), the successful party finally returned to Vesh with the copied True Ritual.

Getting Started

At the opening of **The Serpent Citadel**, it is assumed that the party is in Vesh. This makes sense if they've just completed **The Serpent & the Scepter**, as they would have just recently returned from Marilvaz's tomb with the copied True Ritual. Having succeeded in so dangerous a mission, it is more or less a given that the Vigils would approach the same party again for the difficult task that lay ahead — the transporting of the Amphora and the True Ritual to a place of power where it may be destroyed truly, once and for all.

If your group has not played through **The Serpent & the Scepter**, they might be in Vesh for any number of reasons. While it is vital that they have some sort of strong connection with either the Vigils as a whole or with some specific member of that organization, any viable excuse will do. In fact, Vesh is a perfect place for weary adventurers to rest, as it is the one bright spot for miles around (at least for good-aligned folks).

In either case, a messenger approaches the party while it is in or near Lave. He bears a token marked with a stylized sun with a sword above and below it. A Knowledge (nobility and royalty), Knowledge (local: Vesh), or Intelligence check (DC 10) will recognize this symbol as incorporating the Vigilant Sun heraldry of Vesh. Those who make a Knowledge (nobility and royalty) or Knowledge (local: Vesh) roll (DC 12) will recognize the seal as being that of the Home Commander, the leader of Vesh. If the characters have just completed **The Serpent & the Scepter**, they know this symbol already, of course.

If the heroes have been through the events of the previous module, the messenger says instead,

"I'm sorry to disturb you, my friends, but Commander Durn requests an audience immediately.

"They've uncovered the final piece of the puzzle," he whispers conspiratorially, "And the time has come to put the... ahem... *object* to rest." If the PCs agree, the messenger nods knowingly and leads them straight to Commander Durn.

If, on the other hand, the party has not been involved with the Amphora to date, the messenger begins by asking for a specific member of the group (whoever has the closest relationship with the Vigils). Once he's identified the right character, he says, "I'm sorry to disturb you, but Kelemis Durn, Home Commander of the Vigils, requests an audience with you immediately. He's learned that you are in town, and he needs your help. Would you grant us a bit of your time?"

The PCs (again) meet the Major Domo of the Home Command, Trophion (*male human, Rgr4/Rog5/Vig1, NG*), who guides them into the Sun Room, a large and beautiful room with huge picture windows that contain flecks of mica so that rays of sunlight are split into glittering golden spangles when the sun shines through into the room.

Waiting in the Sun Room is Kelemis Durn (*male human, Rgr6/Ftr6/Vig5, NG*), now almost completely recovered from the wounds he received when his traitorous former lieutenant, Amra, attempted to steal the Amphora. If the players are new to the Serpent Amphora Cycle, the first thing he does is give a very brief summary of the events of the first three adventures in the series. He then explains that the adventurers who retrieved the True Ritual from the tomb of Marilvaz the Scribe are unavailable (or otherwise unable) to continue assisting him. If the party has been involved to this point, he of course refrains from summarizing what they already know. (For more information on Trophion, Kelemis, and the Hall of Command, see **Serpent in the Fold**.)

In either case, Kelemis continues as follows:

"While the True Ritual was being recovered from the Mad Scribe's tomb, my advisors and I were set the task of discovering the best place to perform such a ritual. After all, when it comes to artifacts of titanic age and power, one cannot simply prattle off the disjoining incantation in any old place." Durn says this last with some vexation, and his tone suggests that he himself assumed such was the case before someone more knowledgeable regarding such matters politely informed him otherwise.

"In any event," he continues, "We discovered that the best place — the *only* place, really, considering the artifact's source — is a druidic 'holy site' located deep in the Ganjus Forest. While it is only a few days' ride west from here, it may be a perilous journey, as we know all too well that there are others

who would seek both the Amphora and the only means to destroy it... and they know we have them both. To complicate matters, the Ganjus is the home of the Jordeh druids, and they are not the most hospitable of hosts. Still, we have a man who has some experience with them, and he'll be tagging along; in fact, he'll be leading the expedition, but not so's anybody would know it."

At this, Durn smiles lopsidedly. "And that," he says, "is where you're needed."

"We need you to accompany the Amphora and the True Ritual to the Ganjus, where — if luck is on our side — a little smooth diplomacy will allow us to use one to destroy the other at this sacred druidic site of the Jordeh. It is mostly a straight trek west, but there are some mountains in the way, and you will have to cross these before you catch sight of your first tree. The route itself isn't precisely *hostile* territory, but it can be a dangerous way to travel and we're all

but certain that someone will make a play for the Amphora along the way. So be wary.

"I cannot trust many of my own people enough to send them, given recent events here. Still, those I do will be with you — 12 good soldiers, in all. I just hope that, with your help, it'll be enough to see this monstrosity through to its well-earned end."

He then discusses potential rewards, ranging from training among the Vigilants to cash-in-hand. If the PCs do not succeed, it will probably be because they died trying, but if they somehow return without having destroyed the Amphora, he'll compensate them up to 500 gp each for their troubles in any case (in addition to providing healing assistance, if required). If, however, they do succeed in destroying the Amphora, the rewards will be commensurately greater, from fine equipment (perhaps even magical) to training to grants of land or money.

Chapter One: The Bosom of the Mother

Once the heroes have agreed to assist in destroying the Amphora, they have a few days in Vesh before the expedition is ready to depart. Of course they have the opportunity to acquire any supplies or equipment they feel they might need, and beyond that their time is their own.

The Eyes of the Serpent Mother

The PCs will not know it, but their preparations are being observed. One or more of the servants of the Autumn King Ilkuthsra are already firmly ensconced in the ranks of Durn's own advisors. It was they who arranged for the expedition to travel to the Ganjus Forest, for they have a specific location in mind for the ritual — one that is far more than the mere "holy site" Durn believes it to be. See "Keeping It All Straight" in Chapter 3.

Toward the Elven Wood

When the party returns to the Hall of Command, they may be surprised at the reception awaiting them. A dozen men-at-arms stand fully equipped and ready for travel; all are mounted (with extra horses for the PCs if needed), and four draft horses each pull an identical wooden cart, sealed on all sides and locked with a heavy lock. Durn, the only man present who isn't mounted or carrying a heavy pack, approaches the party.

"Misdirection," he explains, if any character asks him about the carts. "One holds the Amphora, the other three bear lead weight. No sense in making things any easier for the enemy than we have to, is there?"

"Speaking of which," he continues, "let us discuss, for a moment, the coming expedition." He waves his hand, and a man the party has never met

Pindur and His Warriors

Vian Pindur, male human Rgr5/Rog1/Vig4: CR 10; SZ Medium-size humanoid (6 ft., 1 in. tall); HD 5d10+15 (Rgr) plus 1d6+3 (Rgr) plus 4d12+12 (Vig); hp 94; Init +3 (Dex); Spd 30 ft.; AC 19 (+3 Dex, +6 armor); Atk +13/+8 melee (1d8+3, crit x3, +1 battleaxe), or +11/+6 melee (1d8+3, crit x3, +1 battleaxe) and +10 melee (1d6+1, crit 19–20 (x2), masterwork short sword), or +15/+10 ranged (1d8+4, crit x3, +2 mighty composite longbow and masterwork arrows); SA ranger two-weapon fighting, favored enemies (beasts +2, monstrous humanoids +1, ratmen +1 [stacks with bonus vs monstrous humanoids]), sneak attack +1d6, ferocity, spells; SQ sprint, tireless; ALLG; SV Fort +13, Ref +7, Will +4; Str 15, Dex 16, Con 16, Int 11, Wis 14, Cha 12.

Skills: Animal Empathy +6, Climb +3/+5, Diplomacy +6, Gather Information +6, Heal +6, Handle Animal +6, Hide +8/+10 [cloak], Intuit Direction +4, Jump +3/+5, Knowledge (nature) +3, Listen +5, Move Silently +2/+4, Profession (herbalist) +7, Ride +12, Search +2, Spot +8, Wilderness Lore +9. (Two values separated by a slash represent bonuses with/without armor skill check penalties, respectively.)

Feats: Dodge, Endurance, Great Fortitude, Mobility, Mounted Combat, Power Attack, Track, Toughness.

Languages: Common (Veshian), Ledean, Middle Elvish.

Ferocity (Ex): Vian may act normally when *disabled* or *dying*.

Sprint (Ex): 1/hr — Vian may move three times normal movement on a charge action.

Tireless (Ex): Vian suffers no cumulative penalty to the Constitution check DC when running for extended periods

(see PHB, Chapter 8, "Movement-Only Actions," Run subsection).

Ranger spells prepared (1): 1st — *Speak with animals*.

Vigilant spells prepared (2/1): 1st — *delay poison*, *resist elements*; 2nd — *circle of sounds**.

Possessions: +2 chain shirt, ranger's cloak**, wooden holysymbol (Tanil), +1 battleaxe, masterwork short sword, +2 mighty (Str 14) composite longbow, quiver and 20 masterwork arrows, 2 potions of cure light wounds, potion of heroism, blade oil of true strike**.

Soldiers (11), male or female human War6: CR 5; SZ Medium-size humanoid; HD 6d8+6; hp 33; Init +0; Spd 20 ft. in armor; AC 19 (+7 half-plate, +2 large steel shield); Atk +10/+5 melee (1d8+3, crit 19–20 (x2), longsword), or +6 ranged (1d8, crit 19–20 (x2), 80 ft., light crossbow); AL N; SV Fort +6, Ref +2, Will +2; Str 16, Dex 10, Con 12, Int 10, Wis 10, Cha 9.

Skills: Handle Animal +5, Intimidate +5, Profession (soldier) +6, Ride +9, Spot +1.

Feats: Cleave, Mounted Combat, Power Attack, Weapon Focus (longsword).

Languages: Common (Veshian).

Horse, Heavy War (12+): CR 2; SZ Large animal; HD 4d8+12; hp 30; Init +1 (Dex); Spd 50 ft.; AC 14 (–1 size, +1 Dex, +4 natural); Atk 2 hooves +6 melee (1d6+4), bite +1 melee (1d4+2); Face 5 ft. by 10 ft.; AL N; SV Fort +7, Ref +5, Will +2; Str 18, Dex 13, Con 17, Int 2, Wis 13, Cha 6.

Skills: Listen +7, Spot +7.

* These spells or magic items appear in **Relics & Rituals**.

** These spells or magic items appear in **Relics & Rituals 2: Lost Lore**.



steers his horse through the courtyard and stops beside them. The newcomer is perhaps in his early 30s, with blond hair already fading to gray at the edges and a thin scar running down the left side of his neck.

"This," Durn says by way of introduction, "is Vian Piridur. In addition to being one of my best vigilants, he has prior experience with the Jordeh druids of the Ganjus, and stands a fair chance of convincing them to help." Vian nods his greetings, clasping hands with any of the PCs close enough for him to reach without dismounting. "He's empowered to make any agreements necessary with them. You are in charge, but as our emissary to the druids, I'd ask that he be allowed to handle the negotiations with the Jordeh. He'll also be responsible for carrying the copy of the Song of Unmaking.

"However, his face and name are known to the enemy. It would be best, I think, if you all made an effort to keep him out of the way until you do reach the Jordeh. Ask for his assistance if you need it, but do not draw attention to his presence."

The initial leg of the journey takes the expedition west from Lave, across the width of Vesh and into the foothills of the Kelder Mountains. At this stage of the journey, the party experiences relatively little in the way of danger or discomfort. The night air has begun to grow chill, as winter is but a few weeks away, and the occasional autumn shower drizzles chilly water down their backs. The heroes — unless they wish to prepare their own meals — must endure the competent but uninspired cooking of the soldiers.

Fortunately, however, these things represent the extent of the PCs' hardships for now. Vesh is safer than many of the surrounding regions to begin with, and few creatures or bandits in the area would even consider attacking a force so large and obviously well armed.

The Canyon of Souls

At the foot of the towering Kelder peaks, near a path that leads downward into a deep and rocky gorge, the party comes across an encampment. Tents, solidly staked to resist the gusts of wind that blow up from the valley, form the bulk of the camp, although a scattered handful of wooden structures exist as well. The men and women bustling about appear, by their dark skin and loose tunics and leggings, to be native Ontenazans.

As the expedition nears the encampment, allow any PCs with the appropriate abilities to make either a Knowledge (local: Ontenazu) or a bardic knowledge check (DC 15) to see if they are familiar with the traditions and procedures for hiring a wind-walker guide through the caverns. If they are not, Piridur rides up beside whichever PC is serving as the leader or spokesperson for the expedition.

"We'll have to hire a wind-walker guide to direct us through the Canyon of Souls," he whispers. "Be polite, and don't haggle. They consider it uncouth. 50 gold coins per week of travel is their standard asking fee. If the first to approach you requests more, turn him down — *nicely!* — and seek another guide."

He presses a jingling bag of coins into the character's hand. "100 gold," he says. "I don't imagine we should require more than two weeks to pass through the canyon at this time of year."

The Ontenazans watch them, curiously but without hostility, until the party and the warriors dismount. At that point, a young woman approaches them. She is dark-skinned and wears a sand-colored baggy tunic over sheepskin leggings and heavy black boots.

"Greetings, travelers," she says, her melodic voice tinged slightly with Ontenazan accent. "I am called Aisha. How may we welcome you?"

Aisha (*female human*, Rgr 6, LN) is friendly if slightly reserved. She is also one of the wind-walkers, and will mention this if the PCs express any desire to hire a guide or to cross the Canyon of Souls. She confirms Piridur's estimate of travel time — just under two weeks, perhaps 15 days — and cost. Her *asking price of 100 gold is fixed*. She'll not haggle, and the heroes run the risk of offending her if they press the issue. If haggling is attempted, she immediately raises her price to 120 gp; the heroes will either have to pay this amount or find another guide. (Piridur will not cover the extra 20 gp, insisting the PCs pay it out of their own funds, since he did warn them about haggling.)

Assuming the party eventually hires Aisha (or, if they've offended her, some other guide), she offers them the hospitality of several large tents, specifically erected for visitors to the encampment. "Make yourselves as comfortable as you can, and try to sleep," she tells them. "We'll set out first thing in the morning."

Should the PCs suggest attempting the Canyon without a guide, Piridur flatly overrules them. "I'll not commit suicide — to say nothing of murdering my men, and losing the Amphora — to save 100 gold. I can't stop you from going if you wish, of course. If Aisha believes it safe, we'll even try to make a detour and collect your remains for proper burial."

Into the Canyon

Aisha and the soldiers are awake before dawn the next morning, ready to go the moment the sun rises. The beasts of burden, however, well trained though they are, require a bit longer to start moving.

The path the wind-walker intends to travel, seen in the light of morning, is somewhat daunting. The earth is hard and rocky, covered with pebbles and grit enough to make footing precarious. The horses will have to be walked, not ridden. The walls of the canyon are rough, unyielding, and reflect the sunlight downward, heating armor and blinding eyes.

Still, unadulterated heat would be preferable. Merely standing on the precipice exposes the heroes to gusts of wind sufficient to rock them back on their heels and to send their hair streaming behind them like pennants. The roar is a constant companion,

On Their Own

It's possible the PCs will attempt to brave the canyon on their own, either out of stinginess or because they are frustrated with (or suspicious of) Aisha.

This is an awful idea. Once out of sight of the canyon entrance, the heroes must make Intuit Direction checks (DC 15, +1 for every hour of travel after the first) every 10 minutes or become lost. Once a party is lost, it requires another check (DC 20, +1 for every day they have been lost) to regain their bearings.

Further, precious little food or water exists in the Canyon of Souls, making starvation a very real danger. To "get along in the wild" (see *PHB*, Chapter 4, "Wilderness Lore"), a character must make a successful Wilderness Lore check (DC 18) while moving only one-third her normal overland speed in order to find sufficient food and water for herself for one day; she can find enough food and water for another person for every 3 points by which this check exceeds DC 18.

Finally, the winds here range from *strong* to *hurricane-force* at seemingly random intervals and from random headings, with all the relevant affects on the characters and their mounts. (The effects of strong winds can be found in the *DMG*, Chapter 3, "The Environment," *Weather Hazards* subsection.)

making speech difficult unless the listener is within a few feet. If it's this bad at the entrance to the gap, what must conditions be like within?

The next 15 days are a miserable experience. The winds are truly hideous, even at the bottommost levels of the canyon. Speech is nearly impossible; only by screaming at the top of one's lungs at someone directly adjacent can one make oneself heard. The direction of the wind seems to change at the whim of some capricious god, and a character leaning heavily into the wind one moment, trying desperately to make some headway, can find himself flat on his face the next as the next gust suddenly comes from behind. Split lips, chipped teeth, bloody noses, and scraped hands become a universal part of the uniform of Piridur's soldiers. The horses pull and strain against their halters, eyes rolling in near-constant panic. No tents can stand against the wind, and "camp" consists of little more than sleeping bags stuffed as painstakingly behind rocky outcroppings as possible.

Even more frustrating, Aisha refuses to hold a straight course, often doubling back, pausing for hours on end, and making turns that take the expedition in the wrong direction. She explains, if asked,

that these are required precautions if the travelers are to avoid the worst of the winds.

The only upside to this journey is that the combination of conditions in the canyon and the size of the expedition obviate any worry of wandering monsters. This doesn't mean the trip is entirely safe, of course. Due to her knowledge of the canyon, Aisha is able to keep the travelers from the worst winds, but the gusts still fluctuate wildly, with all the difficulty that implies. Conversation is almost impossible, and many of the characters will find their ears aching after only a few hours in the canyon (apply a -2 penalty to all Listen checks while PCs are in the Canyon, in addition to those penalties imposed by actual wind conditions, lasting until the PCs have been out of the Canyon for 1d4+4 hours). Additionally, any time the party is within 10 feet of a canyon wall, a 5% chance exists for a rockslide.

Rockslide

Encounter Level: 2 (slide zone) or 5 (bury zone).

See DMG, Chapter 3, "The Environment," *Landslides and Avalanches* subsection; see also *Wilderness & Wastelands*, Chapter 1, "Hazards," page 8.

The GM is encouraged to make every effort to convey the inherent dangers of this journey. One or more of the warriors may fall prey to the rockslides mentioned above, or should be caught by freak gusts of wind and carried off the walkways to plummet to their deaths to the canyon floor (perhaps along with their unfortunate mounts).

Assuming no side adventures run by the GM during this period slow travel, the expedition arrives at the Featherweb Bridge at the western end of the canyon in the afternoon of the twelfth day. The bridge, hardly more than a network of ropy strands, pulleys, and enormous buckets, does little to inspire confidence, but Aisha assures the heroes that crossing is safe. It requires about 10 minutes to walk across the bridge (Balance check DC 10), and about 30 minutes to haul a wagon, a horse, or a few acrophobic characters across in a bucket. The winds blow and howl, the bridge swings precariously, but the expedition can manage to cross safely by Taking 10 on Balance checks.

After assisting the soldiers in leading their horses up the shallow but precarious incline, Aisha turns to face whichever PC has been serving as the leader.

"Worry little about your hearing!" she shouts, even though the wind is far softer here than it was below. "Exposure to the howling of the canyon sometimes hurts the ears of those unaccustomed to it, but you should be fine after a few hours.

"Will you be returning this way soon? I intend to take my ease for a few days in Featherweb Camp. I'd be happy to lead you back as well."

The PCs can arrange for Aisha to stay to guide them back or not, as they prefer. If they want her to wait for them, turning down other offers, however, they'll have to pay her now. If they've been polite to her — especially if they offer her a gratuity of 10% or more of what they've already paid — she'll even offer to take them back for a mere 40 gold per week, rather than the standard 50 gp/week.

In any case, the expedition continues. Most travelers through the Canyon stop in Ontenazu to relax and recover, but Piridur insists on crossing the grasslands and making straight for the Ganjus.

The Ganjus

The journey from the Canyon of Souls to the Ganjus forest is not a long one, requiring only a few days of travel through the Kelder foothills before the ground becomes less rocky and the first of the trees tower from the fertile soil.

Unless the PCs have been to the Ganjus before, they've likely never seen a sight like the one that greets them now. Enormous trees, still largely adorned with thick green leaves even as winter grows near, stretch skyward to near unimaginable heights. Absent are the twisted growths or barren patches so common to other forests of Ghelspad, wounds of the Divine War that have not yet and perhaps never will heal. Here, in the Ganjus, the earth remains as it was in the days before the titans and the gods nearly destroyed all. Small shrubs and thickets bloom in the shadows of the trees, surviving on the sunlight that trickles, like water, between the branches. Birds call from trunk to trunk, their songs mingling into a single varying tone. Small animals dart about, storing food for the cold months ahead, and avoiding predators that might look upon *them* as winter provisions.

It is a beautiful, uplifting sight — but sorrowful as well, for here is the last echo of what all the Scarred Lands once were.

A Cautious Greeting

The expedition is forced to wend slowly through the forest, as they must find a path wide enough to fit the carts between the trees. Other than a possible random encounter with a creature curious (or hungry) enough to approach despite the size of the expedition, little of note happens until the travelers make camp on their first night in the woods. If these elves are encountered randomly, the GM should make any necessary modifications for time of day, etc., but otherwise the encounter proceeds as follows.

Perhaps an hour after sunset, any characters still awake may make a Listen check (DC 23).

Ganjus Forest Encounters (CR 6)

Encounter Chance: 5% per hour; 5% per hour at night (30% per six hours; 30% per six hours at night)

D% Day	D% Night	Encounter (# Appearing)	CR	EL*	Source
01–02	01–02	Ankheg (1d4)	3	5	MM
—	03–04	Aranea (1)	4	4	MM
03–04	05	Assassin vine (1d4)	3	5	MM
05–06	06	Behir (1d2)	8	8	MM
07–08	07–08	Black bear (1d3)	2	4	MM
—	09–10	Brewer gnome (1d10+4)	4	10	CC
09–13	11–15	Brown bear (1d3)	4	6	MM
14–16	16–17	Centaur (1d4+4)	3	8	MM
17–19	18–20	Dryad (1)	1	1	MM
20	21	Emperor stag (1)	7	7	CC
21–23	22	Ethereal marauder [7 HD] (1)	5	5	MM
24–25	23	Forest walker (1)	10	10	CC2
26–30	—	Giant bee (1d20)	1/2	6	MM
31–32	—	Giant eagle (1d2)	3	3	MM
—	24–25	Giant bombardier beetle (1d10+1)	2	7	MM
—	26–31	Giant owl (1d4+1)	3	6	MM
33–37	32–36	Goblin bear (1)	7	7	CC
38–39	37	Grippett (1d2)	3	3	CC
40–41	38–39	Hamadryad (1d6)	4	7	CC
42–43	—	Hippogriff [6 HD] (1d2)	4	4	MM
44–45	40–41	Krenshar (1d10)	1	5	MM
—	42	Lillend(1d4)	7	9	MM
—	43–44	Mistwalker (1)	4	4	CC
46–50	45–47	Nymph (1)	6	6	MM
51–53	—	Pegasus (1d10)	3	8	MM
54–55	48	Phase spider (1)	5	5	MM
—	49	Phasm (1)	7	7	MM
56–57	50–52	Pseudodragon (1d2)	1	1	MM
58–59	53	River nymph † (2d8–1)	3	9	CC
—	54–56	Satyr [with pipes] (2d6–1)	4	9	MM
60–63	57–60	Shambling mound (1)	6	6	MM
64–65	61	Slarecian worm (1)	4	4	CC2
—	62–63	Spider eater (1)	5	5	MM
—	64–68	Sprite, grig (1d10+1)	1	6	MM
—	69	Sprite, pixie (1d10+1)	4	9	MM
66–67	70–71	Stick giant (1)	13	13	CC
68–69	72–74	Tanil's fox (1)	5	5	CC
70–73	75–77	Treant (1)	8	8	MM
74–75	78–79	Unicorn (1d6)	3	6	MM
76–79	80–84	Willow tree warrior (1)	6	6	CC
80–81	85–86	Wolf spider, giant (1)	3	3	CC
82–96	87–96	Wood elf, Knight of the Oak patrol	**	6	**
97–00	97–00	Wyvern (1d2)	6	6	MM

* Where a dice roll is listed under “# Appearing” (as opposed to a single number), the EL has been determined using the average result of the variable.

** *Wood elf, Knight of the Oak patrol*: Should a random roll indicate an encounter with a party of wood elven knights, proceed to “A Cautious Greeting” below, regardless of how long the expedition has been in the woods. Once this encounter

has occurred, whether randomly or as a set encounter, disregard this result and roll again.

† This encounter occurs only if the PCs are near a waterway within the forest. Otherwise, roll again, ignoring this result.

CC — Creature Collection.

CC2 — Creature Collection 2: Dark Menagerie.

MM — Core Rulebook III.

Success indicates that they hear a single figure approaching the camp from the west-northwest. Whether or not the characters heard him coming, a single elf steps to the edge of the campsite (*male elf, Rgr5, CG; Move Silently +13*). He has long black hair tied in an intricate braid; garbed only in leather leggings and tattoos, some of which indicate his rank, he carries a sleek-looking composite longbow. The weapon is nocked and ready to fire, but the elf is, for the moment, pointing it at the earth by his feet, rather than at any of the expedition.

In a soft voice that nevertheless carries, he says, "I would speak with your leader."

Piridur surreptitiously motions the PCs forward if necessary — particularly the one acting as group leader — but makes a point of trailing not far behind, ensuring that he's available if needed.

The elf bows his head very slightly to whoever identifies himself as leader. This is a gesture of respect, but one that also allows him to keep his eyes on the humans. "It seems unlikely to me," he says in charmingly accented Common, "that so many of you could possibly have entered the Ganjus by accident. I must assume that you are here deliberately, and this troubles us. Why have you come?"

As the elf speaks, allow each PC who is awake a Spot check (DC 20, or 18 for anyone with low-light or darkvision). If they succeed, they notice

several elven archers (*male or female elf, Rgr1/Ftr1, CG*) in the trees around the camp. (There are 5 archers in total.) As with the elf who approached, these elves' bows are not currently aimed at the expedition, but they're clearly ready to act at a moment's notice.

Should a character mention them, the elf to whom they are speaking will nod. "Yes, I have companions. We do not necessarily mean you harm, but neither do we necessarily mean to permit you to travel further into our lands. So I ask again, why have you come?"

Piridur intends to let the PCs handle the discussion, at least unless and until it appears they're getting into trouble. The heroes' best option here is to tell the elves the truth, that they intend to destroy an artifact of Mormo, that they need the Jordeh to assist them in the ritual, and that they have been informed that it must be performed in a certain place of power at the center of the Ganjus. If they choose instead to offer other explanations, the GM must decide how likely the elves are to believe them.

The GM may rely entirely on roleplaying or she may involve Bluff, Diplomacy, and Sense Motive checks, as appropriate, to determine how thoroughly the elves are convinced, as she prefers. If the PCs are at least somewhat convincing and give the elves no reason to distrust them, the leader will eventually assent — to a point....



"I myself cannot give you permission to enter any of our sacred places, nor to conduct your ritual. I can, however, take you to see the Jordeh. As you require them to cast your ritual in any case, I leave it in their hands to decide whether or not you will be permitted to continue."

Violence Begets Violence

Encounter Level: 8

What if the PCs decide to attack the elves? It's unlikely, but odd things happen in circumstances such as these.

The party might be able to take out the elves without too much difficulty. True, the PCs are surrounded, but other than the elves' leader, they are all 2nd level, and only 5 archers are present. On the other hand, Piridur and his force will almost certainly attempt to stop the PCs, possibly even resorting to violence if the characters are unwilling to listen to reason.

If any of the elves escape after being attacked, a contingent of elven warriors, consisting of a several scores of warriors equal to the ones described above, will appear the next day and demand the PCs be turned over to them. If none of the elves escape, it requires two days for the elven contingent to locate the human expedition, but in this case they attack immediately, since they do not know that some of the humans tried to help the elves' brethren.

At this point, the mission is almost certainly an utter failure. The expedition has no way of locating the Jordeh druids, who now wouldn't help them in any case.

Ambush

Assuming the heroes are wise enough to accept the elf's offer, he and his companions lead the entire expedition on a two-day trek through the Ganjus. It may be difficult for the PCs to keep their minds on the mission, given the stunning and verdant beauty that surrounds them. Vegetation thrives here, the animals and birds are healthy and active, and the elven leader — who only now introduces himself as Inaciel — is more than happy to answer most questions about the Ganjus.

Because Inaciel and his companions know the forest well, they are able to avoid the more hazardous areas; for the three days in which they travel with the expedition, reduce the chance of a wandering monster from 5% per hour to 3% (or 18% per 6 hours). Of course, given the size of the force now, most wandering monsters won't pose much of a threat anyway.

Just after noon on the third day, the elves show the expedition into a clearing easily large enough to fit the entire expedition and their carts. A single elf, garbed in a simple brown tunic and leggings, steps forward from behind a tree — or perhaps *through* the tree, it's difficult for the PCs to tell. She appears to be middle-aged, with thin lines on her face and a head of iron-gray hair.

Inaciel speaks to her for a time in Middle Elvish. Any characters who speak that tongue know that he's merely offering formal greetings to one of the Jordeh, and explaining to her the humans' purpose. The woman is Tamllaine (*female elf, Drd6/Jor4, N*). She listens intently, her expression changing only when Inaciel tells her the location of the "place of power" the humans seek. (Obviously, if the heroes didn't provide this information to Inaciel, he cannot convey it to the druid.)

Finally, in heavily accented Ledean, she says, "I will speak with their leader."

If the PC acting as leader starts to rise, Piridur waves them back. "I think this is where I'd best take over. Keep an eye on things here, would you?"

He approaches the druid, making formal greetings in Middle Elvish, and she then nods and leads him across the clearing and into the trees, where they may speak undisturbed.

(If the PCs refuse to allow Piridur to take over at this point, he will try to insist gently that is all happening as Kelemis Durn had foreseen, and according to their orders. If they are not willing to back down — very possible if the PCs remember Amra Varith's treachery in *Serpent in the Fold* — the one of the PCs may be allowed to accompany him, although this may alter upcoming events to some extent.)

For a time, perhaps 20 minutes, the heroes have little to do. Piridur's soldiers take the opportunity to brush, feed, and water their horses, check up on the carts' wheels and axles, sharpen weapons, polish armor, grab some rations and, in general, do the things traveling soldiers do when they have an unexpected break. The elven warriors watch curiously, occasionally asking questions about human traveling habits and equipment. Inaciel and the elves are more than happy to converse on pretty much any topic the PCs care to bring up.

And then, things start to go very wrong.

The first clue that all is not right is the abrupt fading of the sun as the sky suddenly clouds over. The wind picks up, whipping small items about the clearing, and a slick rain begins to fall. Anyone with ranks in Knowledge (nature) or Wilderness Lore recognizes that this sudden storm is unnatural.

Over the rising wind, Inaciel shouts, "Hold here, if you can! We're going to warn Tamllaine!" All six

elves vanish into the trees, ducking to avoid the branches now thrashing about in the wind.

The PCs and Piridur's soldiers have 3 rounds to act in any manner they choose. Then, with a maniacal cackle that carries even over the roaring wind, a pair of storm hags swoop down from the clouds, and a wood golem lumbers into the clearing from amidst the trees.

The wind in the clearing is *strong*, imposing a penalty of -2 to all ranged attacks among other effects

(see DMG, Chapter 3, "The Environment," *Weather Hazards* subsection).

For the first 2 rounds, combat proceeds normally. The hags—and to a lesser extent the golem—will react to any unusual actions by the PCs, but otherwise seem content merely to deal out damage however possible.

In the 3rd round, a new participant enters the fray, although the heroes probably won't be aware of it. Circling in the clouds overhead is the Daral Annot's ace in the hole

Wood, Wind, and Weather

Encounter Level: 11 (but see below)

Storm hags (2), female storm hag [formerly human] Drd6: CR 9; SZ Large monstrous humanoid; HD 6d8+18; hp 49, 41; Init +5 (Dex); Spd 40 ft., fly 80 ft. (good); AC 20 (+5 Dex, +5 natural); Atk bite +6 melee (1d6+3), 2 claws +1 melee (1d6+1), hair +3 melee (special, hair); Reach 10 ft. (20 ft. for hair); SA improved grab, constrict 1d6+3, *Speak with Animals*, spells; SQ damage reduction 5/+1, electricity resistance 20, nature sense, woodland stride, trackless step, resist nature's lure, *wild shape* (2/day); AL NE; SV Fort +8, Ref +7, Will +10; Str 16, Dex 20, Con 17, Int 10, Wis 21, Cha 14.

Skills: Animal Empathy +5, Concentration +12, Handle Animal +5, Intuit Direction +11, Knowledge (nature) +6, Profession (herbalist) +11, Scry +6, Spellcraft +9, Wilderness Lore +11.

Feats: Blind-Fight, Brew Potion, Combat Casting, Flyby Attack, Heighten Spell, Spell Penetration, Weapon Finesse (hair).

Special Attacks: *Improved Grab* (Ex): To use this ability, the storm hag must hit an opponent of up to Medium-size with a hair attack. If she hits, she can constrict; *Constrict* (Ex): These hags deal 1d6+3 points of damage with a successful grapple check; *Speak with Animals* (Sp): Hags may speak with animals at will, as the spell, but only with those animals normally found in the hag's normal habitat.

Druid spells prepared (5/5/4/3): 0—*chill/warmth**, *create water*, *detect magic*, *light*, *resistance*; 1st—*chameleon skin**, *cure light wounds* (x2), *magic fang*, *obscuring mist*; 2nd—*chill metal*, *cold snap**, *downdraft***, *entangle* (heightened); 3rd—*call lightning*, *Ganest's farstrike**, *summon nature's ally III*.

* From *Relics & Rituals*.

** From *Relics & Rituals 2: Lost Lore*.

Source: *Creature Collection*.

Wood golem: CR 6; SZ Medium-size construct; HD 10d10; HP 60; Init -2 (Dex); Spd 15 ft.; AC 18 (-2 Dex, +10 natural); Atk 2 slams +11 melee (2d6+4 and 1d4 thorns); SA thorns; SQ construct, magic immunity, weapon immunity, damage reduction 15/+1, regeneration 1; AL N; SV Fort +3, Ref +1, Will +3; Str 18, Dex 6, Con —, Int —, Wis 11, Cha 2.

Special Attacks: Thorns (Ex): At will as a free action, the wood golem may sprout thorns from its body. These thorns deal an additional 1d4 points of

piercing damage with every successful slam attack. A creature that attempts to grapple the golem takes automatic thorn damage each round the grapple is maintained.

Special Qualities: *Construct:* Immune to critical hits, subdual damage, death from massive damage, poison, disease, blindness, deafness, drowning, death spells, stunning or mind-affecting spells; *Magic immunity* (Ex): Wood golems are immune to all spells, spell-like abilities, and supernatural effects, except as follows: a *warp wood* or any fire-based spell slows the golem (as the *slow* spell) for 2d6 rounds, no saving throw, and an *antiplant shell* holds the golem at bay as a *protection from evil* keeps outsiders at bay; *Weapon immunity* (Ex): Immune to piercing damage and to blows from wooden weapons, magical or not (wood golems are immune to each other's attacks); half damage from bludgeoning attacks; *Regeneration* (Ex): Heals 1 point per minute when in contact with a living tree.

Source: *Creature Collection*.

Technically this is a level 11 encounter; the PCs are not, however, fighting alone. Unless they've lost numerous companions to random encounters, they have a number of 6th level warriors fighting alongside them. Be sure to divide any experience gained among the NPCs as well as the PCs. Furthermore, this isn't necessarily a fight to the death—see below.

If the GM chooses, she can run this as a single massive melee, but given the sheer number of combatants, that's going to get very complicated (to say nothing of boring the players as they wait for their turn to come around again). Instead, the GM may choose to run the PCs in combat against their own opponent—one of the storm hags is probably best—without worrying about rolling for the other NPCs. If the DM doesn't wish to roll for all the NPCs, she should assume that by the time the combat is over—5 rounds after it's begun, unless the players manage to change things—2d4 of the warriors are dead, as is one of the storm hags. The golem is largely uninjured (unless the PCs themselves battled it), as the warriors can do little to penetrate its damage reduction without critical hits.

— a woodwreck dragon, ridden by none other than the storm hag Hielaa (whom the PCs have encountered twice before if they've played through previous chapters of The Serpent Amphora Cycle). Because the dragon is waiting in the clouds, it can be noticed only by a PC who takes a full

round to observe the sky, and then only with a successful Spot check (DC 20).

The dragon's action in the 3rd round of combat is simply to delay its action, ensuring that when it does act, it knows what is happening. At the end of the 3rd round,

When We Three Meet Again...

Encounter Level: 15 (but see below)

Sath-Theransus, woodwreck dragon: CR 14; SZ Huge dragon (earth); HD 18d12+108; hp 225; Init +9 (+5 Dex, +4 Improved Initiative); Spd 60 ft., climb 40 ft., fly 90 ft. (poor), swim 50 ft.; AC 31 (–2 size, +5 Dex, +18 natural); Atk bite +26 melee (2d10+10), 2 claws +21 melee (2d6+5); Face 10 ft. by 20 ft.; Reach 10 ft.; SA breath weapon, frightful presence, pounce, rake 2d6+5, spells; SQ damage reduction 10/+3, immunities, SR 18, blindsight 180 ft.; AL NE; SV Fort +17, Ref +16, Will +14; Str 30, Dex 20† (16), Con 22, Int 16, Wis 16, Cha 16.

Skills: Concentration +24, Handle Animal +15, Hide +18, Knowledge (arcana) +21, Knowledge (geography) +8, Knowledge (history) +8, Listen +21, Move Silently +23, Scry +22, Search +22, Spellcraft +20, Spot +12, Swim +18.

Feats: Cleave, Flyby Attack, Improved Initiative, Power Attack, Snatch.

Special Attacks: *Breath weapon (Su):* 50-ft. line of lightning, 10d10 electricity damage, Reflex half (DC 25); *Frightful presence (Ex):* 180 feet, Will save (DC 22) or become panicked for 4d6 rounds if less than 3 HD or levels, or else shaken for 4d6 rounds if 4 HD or levels or higher; *Pounce (Ex):* If a woodwreck dragon dives or leaps upon a foe as its first melee action against that foe, it can make a full attack even if it has already taken a move action that round; *Rake (Ex):* A woodwreck dragon that pounces on an opponent can make two rake attacks (+21 melee) with its hind legs for 2d6+5 points of damage each. As long as it remains atop an opponent, it can continue to rake each round, in addition to its normal attacks.

Sorcerer spells known (6/7/7/7/6/5/3): 0 — *clean**, *dancing lights*, *detect magic*, *enumerate**, *filch***, *mage hand*, *open/close*, *read magic*, *resistance*; 1st — *comprehend languages*, *feather fall*, *protection from good*, *serpents' stare**, *shield*; 2nd — *alibi**, *cat's grace*, *detect thoughts*, *invisibility*, *Ganest's farstrike**; 3rd — *dispel magic*, *great knock**, *haste*, *suggestion*; 4th — *dimension door*, *scrying*, *verminplague**; 5th — *hold monster*, *shadow evocation*; 6th — *power word thunder**. As a 12th-level sorcerer.

Special Qualities: *Immunities (Ex):* Immune to electricity, paralysis, poison, and sleep effects.

Source: **Creature Collection**

Note: Sath-Theransus has cast *cat's grace* on himself, so his stats above reflect his having a +4 bonus to Dexterity from that spell.

Hielaa, storm hag (formerly half-orc) Drd9: CR 12; SZ Large monstrous humanoid; HD 9d8+45; hp 117; Init +6 (Dex); Spd 40 ft., fly 80 ft. (good); AC 21 (+6 Dex, +5 natural); Atk bite +10 melee (1d6+5), 2 claws +5 melee (1d6+2), hair +6 melee (special, hair); Reach 10 ft.

(20 ft. for hair); SA improved grab, constrict 1d6+5, *speak with animals*, spells; SQ damage reduction 5/+1, electricity resistance 20, nature sense, woodland stride, trackless step, resist nature's lure, *wild shape* (3/day; Small to Large), venom immunity; AL CE; SV Fort +11, Ref +9, Will +12; Str 20, Dex 22, Con 20, Int 12, Wis 22, Cha 12.

Skills: Animal Empathy +4, Concentration +13, Handle Animal +3, Intuit Direction +11, Knowledge (nature) +11, Ritual Casting* +10, Scry +4, Spellcraft +12, Wilderness Lore +15.

Feats: Blind-Fight, Brew Potion, Combat Casting, Flyby Attack, Heighten Spell, Quicken Spell, Spell Penetration, Weapon Finesse (hair).

Special Attacks: *Improved grab (Ex):* To use this ability, Hielaa must hit an opponent of up to Medium-size with a hair attack. If she hits, she can constrict; *Constrict (Ex):* Hielaa deals 1d6+5 points of damage with a successful grapple check; *Speak with animals (Sp):* Hags may speak with animals at will, as the spell, but only with those animals normally found in the hag's normal habitat.

Druid spells prepared (6/6/6/4/3/2): 0 — *adhere to wood**, *chill/warmth**, *detect magic*, *flare*, *light*, *resistance*; 1st — *cure light wounds* (x2), *endure elements*, *entangle*, *magic fang* (x2); 2nd — *charm person or animal*, *frog tongue**, *heat metal*, *hold animal*, *soften earth and stone*, *speak with animals*; 3rd — *call lightning*, *contagion*, *Ganest's farstrike**, *poison*; 4th — *dispel magic*, *rusting grasp*, *sleet storm*; 5th — *control winds*, *entangle* (quicken).

Possessions: 4 javelins of lightning, oil of bane of the forge** (3 doses), 3 potions of enhanced senses**, 3 potions of cure moderate wounds, wand of downdraft** (50 chg),

Source: **Creature Collection.**

* From **Relics & Rituals.**

** From **Relics & Rituals 2: Lost Lore.**

These stat blocks are provided just against the awful possibility that the GM needs them, but in truth, the PCs are never expected to face the dragon directly. Sath-Theransus alone is easily a match for a 7th-level party, to say nothing of Hielaa. Fortunately, the dragon's not interested in slaughter now, and will depart as soon as it has its claws on the Amphora (see below). If pursued, however, it has no objection to blasting its enemies out of the air with its breath weapon.

Because the dragon does not remain to fight, the encounter is not considered as challenging as if the PCs had to fight a prolonged battle. If the party manages to prevent it from stealing the Amphora without getting themselves killed, however, they should receive experience as though they'd overcome an EL 8 encounter.

after waiting until all opponents have acted, Sath-Theransus dives.

The first warning the heroes have is the sound of flapping wings and the cackling of Hiela, which may sound uncomfortably familiar. Hiela is using her *control winds* spell to prevent the storm from interfering with the dragon's flight, and had already cast *frog tongue*. Utilizing a *haste* spell, which it cast upon itself in the round immediately before it arrived, the dragon plummets from the clouds directly atop the cart containing the Amphora — at full speed, it can dive 180 feet (double speed for diving) and still reduce the wagon to tinder with its pounce attack; Hiela has taken a readied action to grab the small chest holding the Amphora with her *frog tongue* as soon as it becomes visible, so her action triggers at this point, amid the dragon's actions; then, the dragon uses its final *hasted* action to cast *dimension door*, effectively teleporting itself and its rider 880 feet straight up. Between the clouds and the cover provided by the trees, this puts them out of range of most any ranged attacks and spells, but resourceful PCs might somehow be able to attack or pursue them.

In the 4th round, the dragon, being effectively stalled in flight due to having just used *dimension door*, falls 150 feet and must make a Reflex save (DC 20) to recover from the stall (see DMG, Chapter 3, "Movement," *Tactical Aerial Movement* subsection). If it fails this save, it falls another 300 feet each subsequent round, and may attempt the Reflex save again each round; due to its *haste* spell (which in essence grants

one full action every 2 rounds), it gets two saves for this purpose every second round. If necessary, it will simply *dimension door* upwards again in the 3rd round of the fall, before it hits the ground, and repeat the process until it regains control of its flight. Once the dragon recovers from the stall, it heads west (using the run action in flight to travel a hasted 540 feet per round), while Hiela uses her spells, her wand, and her *javelins of lightning* to deal with any aerial pursuit.

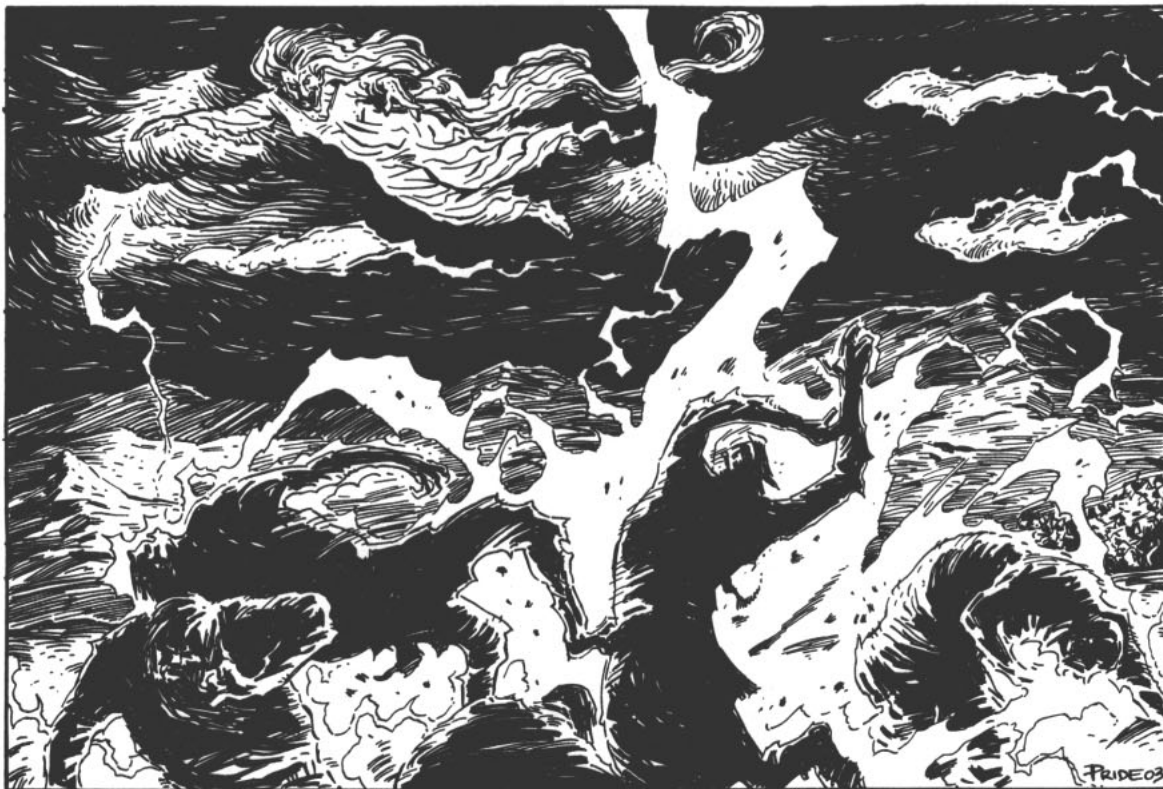
During the 4th and 5th rounds, the first two hags (if both are still active) and the wood golem concentrate their efforts on covering the dragon's escape, focusing attacks on anyone who seems capable of discerning or following it. In the 6th round, unless circumstances prevent them from doing so, they retreat, the golem covering the hags as they leave if necessary. If somehow cornered, they fight to the death.

Should the heroes somehow manage to prevent Hiela and Sath-Theransus from snatching the Amphora, or if they've moved it from the wagon and hidden it somewhere else, the pair does not hang around to search for it.

Insult to Injury

The heroes are now dealing with the loss of many of Piridur's soldiers, and probably that of the Amphora itself. And the worst has not happened yet.

If the heroes immediately head west, trying to find Piridur and the elves, they soon encounter Inaciel, looking haggard. If they do not



leave the clearing, he arrives perhaps 10 minutes later. In either case, his message is the same.

"I'm afraid you had better come with me. Quickly."

Inaciel immediately turns and sprints into the woods, assuming the heroes will manage to keep up with him. After a brief but exhausting run, pushing through thick scrub and between heavy trees, feet sinking deeply into earth made muddy by the recent rains, the heroes find themselves standing alongside Inaciel in another much smaller clearing. Several of his elven companions are crouched low, tending to something — or someone — on the ground. The earth is torn and lies in chunks, as though something large and clawed recently stood here.

The elves draw back as the party approaches, and the PCs can now see the druid Tamllaine lying on the sodden earth, torn and bloodied. A substantial portion of the mud around her is unusually dark, suggesting that as much blood as water has soaked into it.

"Dragon!" she chokes out as soon as she spots the characters. "Came from... your direction. Couldn't... stop it. It took... it took your companion, Piridur."

The players probably won't need reminding, but if they do, any one of the surviving soldiers can be heard to gasp, "But the commander had the ritual!"

The Dar al Annot seems to have won. (Tamllaine or any of the elves can explain that the storm hags of the region serve that sect, if the players are unaware of that fact.) They have a high-ranking vigilant. They have the only available copy of the Song of Unmaking (hidden in the secret pocket in Piridur's *ranger's cloak*). And, unless the PCs pulled off a truly amazing coup earlier, they also have the Serpent Amphora itself.

But all is not entirely lost, for the injured druid offers a ray of hope. "The dragon" she gasps, "flew southwest. We can...call upon the birds and the...beasts of the wood, to learn...where it went. You may yet... be able to retrieve what you have lost.

Indeed, after only a few minutes, several elves enter the clearing and one draws out a wand that she uses to cure a small portion of Tamllaine's terrible wounds. They then report to Tamllaine that the dragon flew directly toward the Hornsaw Forest, passing swiftly out of the Ganjus and over the Haggard Hills. Tamllaine frowns darkly at this news.

"The Hornsaw Forest is a hideous, dangerous place," the druid tells them, her breathing already coming a little more steadily, "with much room for even a dragon to hide. I fear that you've much toil ahead of you, if you would recover the Amphora, for I cannot even tell you where in the Hornsaw to begin.

"I can assure you," she continues, "that the Jordeh will be only too happy to perform this ritual for you, now that we have seen what is at stake. If you survive the citadel of the Dar al Annot, return to the southernmost point of the Ganjus, southwest of the Healing Circle. My brethren will await you there."

Several of the elves have maps of the Ganjus and its surroundings, and will be able to show the PCs the spot of which she speaks.

What Dragon?

It seems impossible, given the chaos of combat and the sheer strength and number of the foe, but a truly resourceful (and astoundingly lucky) group of players might find some means of slaying the woodwreck dragon, or at least driving it off in such a way that it cannot proceed west to kidnap Piridur.

Should the dragon somehow be stopped from reaching Piridur, don't worry — the PCs will still have to recover the Amphora. The results, ultimately, are the same. If it didn't get the Amphora, though, Piridur should be captured instead, so that the PCs still have reason to go to the Hornsaw. If the dragon can't take him, for some reason, and also didn't get the Amphora, then simply have two more storm hags bear Piridur away instead.

It is also possible that, whether or not the heroes managed to prevent the dragon from stealing the Amphora, they might decide simply to return to Vesh and leave the captured Piridur to his fate. The surviving warriors and the elves both should oppose this notion, reminding the PCs that the journey back to Vesh is long and that Piridur can expect nothing but a slow, lingering death — at best — from the Dar al Annot. If the PCs choose to return to Vesh anyway, the GM should feel no guilt for having Sath-Theransus (or one of his siblings) attack them on the way back, this time with full intent to kill, thus preventing any further interference from the meddling heroes.

Haggard Hills (CR7) Encounters

Encounter Chance: 1% per hour; 3% per hour at night (6% per 6 hours; 18% per 6 hours at night)

D% Day	D% Night	Encounter (# Encountered)	CR	EL*	Source
01	01–02	Acid shambler (2d4)	1	5	CC
02–04	03–05	Ankheg (1d4)	3	5	MM
05–14	06–15	Arcane symbiote** (1)	**	**	CC2
15	16	Barrow worm (1)	8	8	CC
16	17	Beholder (1)	13	13	MM
17–18	18–19	Blade beast (1d6)	3	6	CC2
19–20	—	Blight wolf (2d4)	5	10	CC
—	20–22	Bone lord (1)	6	6	CC
21–22	23–24	Bonewing (1d4)	3	5	CC2
—	25	Butcher spirit † (3d6)	†	†	CC
23	26	Carrion hound (1d6+4)	3	9	CC2
24–26	—	Chern's children (1 swarm)	6	6	CC2
27	27	Devourer (1)	11	11	MM
—	28	Dire hillcat [as dire lion] (1d4+6)	5	11	MM
—	29	Displacer beast (1d4+6)	4	10	MM
28	30	Dragon, mock (1d2)	4	4	CC
29–31	—	Dragonne (1d2)	7	7	MM
32–39	31–35	Ettin (1d4)	5	7	MM
40	36	Flailing dreadnought (1)	12	12	CC2
—	37–38	Gauntlet (1)	4	4	CC2
41	39	Gaurak troll (1d3+1)	8	11	CC2
—	40–49	Ghoul (1d6+6)	1	7	MM
42–44	—	Giant wasp (1d4+1)	3	6	MM
45–46	—	Gore beetle (1d10+10)	1/2	6	CC
47	50	Gorgon, low (1d4+1)	7	10	CC
48	51	Grey render (1)	8	8	MM
—	52	Hag, cavern*** (1)	9	9	CC
49	53	Howling abomination (1d4+1)	8	11	CC2
50–51	—	Manticora (1d4+1)	1	3	CC
—	54	Mohrg (1d4)	8	10	MM
52–54	—	Monstrous scorpion, Large (1d4+1)	2	5	MM
55–64	55–61	Monstrous spider, Gargantuan (1)	7	7	MM
65–67	62–64	Monstrous spider, Large (1d4+1)	2	5	MM
—	65	Nightshade, nightwing (1)	14	14	MM
—	66	Nightshade, nightcrawler (1)	18	18	MM
—	67–73	Night-touched pack‡	‡	‡	CC2
68–69	74–75	Ratman, brown gorgon (1d6x15)	1/2	10	CC
70–71	—	Scythe falcon (1d2)	2	2	CC
72	—	Shard spider (1d2)	3	3	CC2
73–74	—	Snake, Huge viper (1)	3	3	MM
75–81	76–80	Troll (1d4)	5	7	MM
82–95	81–86	Umber hulk (1)	7	7	MM
—	87–88	Undead ooze (1)	4	4	CC
96–98	89–94	Vengaurak (1)	4	4	CC
—	95	Wight (1d6+5)	3	9	MM
—	96–99	Wolfrat (1d3+1)	1	4	CC2
99–00	00	Wyvern (1d6)	6	9	MM

* Where a dice roll is listed under “# Appearing” (as opposed to a single number), the EL has been determined using the average result of the variable.

** *Arcane symbiote*: Roll again on the encounter chart; this determines the creature to which the arcane symbiote has attached itself. Add 1 to the CR of that encounter. If more than one creature is rolled, the symbiote has attached itself to one of them and probably leads the group.

*** Use a 6th-level half-elf sorceress with the cavern hag template.

† Roll randomly or choose from among the animals on the encounter chart; apply the butcher spirit template to this creature.

‡ *Night-touched pack*: One night-touched controller plus 1d8 night-touched hounds.

CC — **Creature Collection.**

CC2 — **Creature Collection 2: Dark Menagerie.**

MM — **Core Rulebook III.**

A Parting of the Ways

As the PCs prepare to depart, one of Piridur's warriors, her face twisted in a look of indecision, approaches whichever character was serving as the expedition's leader — and is now, in Piridur's absence, commander in fact.

"Begging your pardon, sir," she says. "There's nothing we'd like more than to head down to the Hornsaw and slaughter every damn druid there until we get Commander Piridur back. But we're under very strict orders from Home Commander Durn. We're supposed to report back if we lose the Amphora, sir, so he can prepare to defend Vesh against anything the bastards might conjure up with it. We know that you'll have a better chance of getting it back if we're with you, but we can't risk *all* of us dying in the attempt. There'd be nobody left to carry a warning."

Although technically her commanding officer, the PC lacks the authority to countermand an order from Durn himself. Splitting the warriors, so that some can accompany the heroes, isn't a wise idea either. Most of the survivors are wounded, and a weakened group may not make it back to Lave. After all, the journey back will be far less safe than the journey here, as monsters that were frightened by the expedition's numbers may be more willing to attack a smaller group.

As much as they hate the notion of leaving with their leader in trouble, the soldiers are determined to follow orders and return home to warn the Vigils. "We're counting on you, sir," the warrior tells the PC. "Don't let the commander down."

The Haggard Hills

Inaciel and his companions guide the party to the southern edge of the Ganjus, a journey that takes over a week even with native guides. Once again, reduce the odds of random encounters to only 3% per hour (18% per 6 hours).

Just as it seems the journey will become interminable and the beauty of the Ganjus has lost its appeal, the trees begin to thin, the terrain to gently rise and fall. Ahead, through the dwindling foliage, the PCs can begin to make out the first of the rises that mark the Haggard Hills.

"This is where we leave you," Inaciel tells them. "Should you succeed, return to the Healing Circle, or as near to it as you are able. The Jordeh will await you, and offer sanctuary." With a brief bow, he is gone, fading away into the forest. The PCs are now truly on their own.

Hornsaw Forest (CR8) Encounters

* Where a dice roll is listed under "# Appearing" (as opposed to a single number), the EL has been determined using the average result of the variable.

** *Dark womb hive*: A dark womb hive consists of the hive mother (CR 6) and up to EL 9 of cloned "children."

*** *Dar al Annot*: Dar al Annot groups consist of 1d3+2 witches (druids, sorcerers, and adepts, mostly female, of CR 1 to 3), led by a 6th- to 8th-level druid (75% female) or female sorcerer.

† *Gorgon patrol*: Gorgon patrols consist of 1d3 low gorgons (ave. EL 9), 2d6 common ratmen (ave. EL 4), and 1d3 red witch slitheren of 2nd to 4th level (ave. EL 5), all led by a single high gorgon (CR 10).

‡ *Hags*: The typical moon hag encountered in the Hornsaw is a Drd4/Sor4 with the moon hag template. The typical storm hag encountered in the Hornsaw is a Drd6 with the storm hag template.

+ *Hex creature*: A hex creature is any normal animal/vermin or group of the like with the hex creature template applied (see CC2), of a number sufficient to bring the total EL to 8. Creatures typically affected include boars, cougars (use leopard stats), or wolves; hawks, ravens, or owls; black or brown bears; or monstrous centipedes or spiders.

++ *Ratman patrol*: Ratman patrols are made up of 1d10+5 normal ratmen, led by 2 red witch slitheren of 3rd to 5th level.

^^ *Viper swarm*: Viper swarms are a mass of frenzied poisonous serpents made up of 1d8+4 Tiny vipers, 1d8+4 Small vipers, 1d6+2 Medium-size vipers, 1d3 Large vipers, and 1d3 Huge vipers.

CC — Creature Collection.

CC2 — Creature Collection 2: Dark Menagerie.

MM — Core Rulebook III.

The terrain the heroes see before them is a study in contradictions. Unlike the Ganjus, the Haggard Hills sport the all too familiar signs of the Divine War. Much of the land is blasted, barren wasteland covered in nothing but rock and scrub. The hills rise like boils on the skin of the earth, and the wind that blows across them carries an empty smell.

Yet the region also shows faint but noticeable signs of healing. For every barren hill, another is covered in a coat of grass, often brown and feeble, but living nonetheless. The occasional snake darts across the characters' path, a rabbit rustles one of the sickly bushes, a thin raptor flies overhead seeking its next meal. The land is not lush, it is not thriving, but it lives and breathes and grows stronger with every passing season.

Although fewer than 100 miles separate the Ganjus from the Hornsaw, the uneven and rocky

Hornsaw Forest (CR8) Encounters

Encounter Chance: 8% per hour, day or night (48% per 6 hours)

D% Day	D% Night	Encounter (# Encountered)	CR	EL*	Source
01-03	01-04	Assassin vine (1d3+3)	3	8	MM
04-05	05	Bitter tree (1)	10	10	CC2
06-07	06-07	Blade beast (1d6)	3	6	CC2
08-09	—	Blade hood (1d3)	3	5	CC
10	08	Blood reaper (1)	10	10	CC2
11-13	—	Bloodfly (5d6)	1	9	CC2
14	09	Bloodman (1d4+4)	5	10	CC2
—	10-11	Bonewing (1d4)	3	5	CC2
15-16	12	Carnivorous tree (1d3)	6	8	CC2
17-18	13-14	Chual (1)	7	7	MM
19	15	Dark womb hive**	**	10	CC2
20-24	—	Dar al Annot	***	8	***
25	16	Dragon, woodwrack (1)	14	14	CC
26-27	17-20	Gallows eye (1)	8	8	CC2
28-31	—	Giant constrictor snake (1d3+1)	5	8	MM
32-33	21-22	Goblin bear (1)	7	7	CC
34-35	23	Golem, serpent (1d3+1)	6	9	CC2
36-38	—	Gore beetle (2d4+4)	1	7	CC
39-42	24-28	Gorgon, low (1d6)	5	8	CC
43-44	29-30	Gorgon patrol	†	11	CC
—	31-32	Hag, moon† (1)	13	13	CC
45-47	33-35	Hag, storm† (1)	9	9	CC
48-50	36-39	Hagling, moon (1d3+5)	2	8	CC2
51-54	40-44	Hagling, storm (1d3+5)	2	8	CC2
55	45	Hex creature (+)	+	8	CC2
56-60	46-50	Hornsaw unicorn (1d8)	7	11	CC
61-62	51-53	Howling abomination (1)	8	8	CC2
63	54	Leeching willow (1d3)	7	9	CC2
64-66	55-57	Medusa (1d3+1)	7	10	MM
—	58-63	Naga, dark (1)	8	8	MM
67-68	64-65	Naga, hollow (1)	9	9	CC
69-70	66-67	Naga, spirit (1)	9	9	MM
71-72	68-69	Narleth (1)	5	5	CC
—	70	Owlbear (1d4+4)	4	9	MM
73-74	71	Rast (1)	5	5	MM
75-77	72-77	Ratman patrol	++	8	++
78-79	78	Sagon (3d6)	1/2	6	CC2
80-82	79-81	Serpent root [12 HD] (1)	7	7	CC
83-84	82-83	Shambling mound (1)	6	6	MM
85-86	84-85	Skiver (2d4)	3	8	CC2
—	86-88	Stirge (1d6+7)	1/2	6	MM
87-88	89-90	Sundered woman (1)	5	5	CC2
89-90	91-92	Tendriculos (1)	6	6	MM
91-92	93-94	Totem of Mormo (1d6)	2	5	CC2
93-94	95-98	Troll (1d3+1)	5	8	MM
95-00	—	Viper swarm	^^	8	MM
—	99-00	Wyrmspawn, adult 1d6+1	2	6	CC

terrain prevents travelers from crossing the region as swiftly as they otherwise might. Without magical aid, it requires five days of travel across the Haggard Hills before the PCs find themselves standing at the edge of yet another forest. The prospects of finding Piridur alive after so long are growing slim, but the heroes cannot afford to stop. Even if the vigilant is

dead, the ritual and the Amphora still wait to be reclaimed.

The Hornsaw Forest

Here, at the northern section of the Hornsaw, often called the Broadreach Horizon, the forest is not quite so twisted and horrible as elsewhere. The trees



still loom menacingly above the characters, their branches scraping together in a breeze that should be too weak to move them, their shadows stretching before them in directions completely at odds with the ambient light. The soil is thick, sticky, as though it has absorbed something of the corrupted essence of Mormo's curse. No birdsong drifts on the wind; instead, the screeches and screams of twisted animals born to a life of endless pain assail the travelers' ears. And that wind carries with it not the scent of flowering and blooming things, but the sickly stench of rot, as though each rise and fall of the terrain hides a pile of decaying flesh behind it.

This region is home to the Hornsaw's remaining elven population. The heroes do not see them, will not encounter them, but their protective, cleansing presence can be felt, if only by those who know the horrors of the rest of the forest. It's even worse further south.

This, then, is the forest in which the Dar al Annot dwell — hundreds of square miles of twisted, warped horrors through which the heroes must search if they are to retrieve what was lost.

The Sentinel

The PCs have, unfortunately, no idea where in the woods the headquarters of the Dar al Annot might be, and they certainly cannot just search the forest blindly in the hopes of stumbling over the ritual and the Amphora. Still, at least initially, it appears as though they've no other choice.

Allow the players to do as they wish, to explore the woods as they see fit, for 1d3 days. Perhaps the clever use of divinations might help in some way, although such resources may be limited in a 6th- or 7th-level party. However, on the final day, any character who succeeds at either a Spot or Listen check (DC 19) notices that they are being followed.

If the PCs turn back and attempt to confront their pursuers, the encounter described below occurs immediately. Otherwise, they are approached as they make their next camp.

In either case, the heroes suddenly hear a very loud rustling within the nearby brush. An instant later, an equine creature steps into sight. It looks like a large warhorse, covered in shaggy, walnut-hued fur. Its hooves and teeth glint in the fading light, as does the massive, serrated horn jutting from its forehead. The creature snorts angrily and paws the earth, but it does not move to attack, even going so far as to retreat a few steps if anyone moves toward it.

"I suggest you make no sudden moves," a low voice calls out in Ledeian from the trees to the creature's right. "Duzghul isn't looking for a fight, but he's...edgy."

A woman appears from the trees. She has dark hair, the exact color of which is indeterminate be-

neath layers of caked-in dirt. Her skin and clothes are equally filthy; the only bright spots on her face are her glinting blue eyes. Still, she wears studded leather of obviously good quality, although the craftsmanship is not immediately apparent beneath the grime, and she carries two curved blades that appear to have been fashioned from the horns of creatures like her companion.

If anyone asks her who she is in either Ledean or Sylvan, she snaps out, "I'm called Leral Moradroth. Now who the hells are you, and what are you doing in my forest?" (If no one has spoken for more than a brief moment after she appears, she skips the introduction and immediately asks why the party is present.)

Leral, despite her gruff demeanor, isn't looking for a fight. Actually, although she'll reveal this fact only under duress, she's been searching for this party of "outsiders." Leral has connections with the Cannibals of Khet — specifically with the Bringers of

Autumn. She also holds a grudge against the local storm hags, because Hielaa killed her first unicorn companion. (Duzghul is her second.) Thus, the Bringers of Autumn — who wish to see the Amphora taken back from the Dar al Annot — delivered a message to Leral. She still has the missive on her, although she has no intention of actually showing it to the party.

It reads simply, "We have arranged for the Crone to be drawn away from Annot Kalambath. See that the Veshan operatives find their way there and escape with their prize."

Because she doesn't want to admit that she was waiting for the party, she questions them about their intentions, acting both angry and rude — but not to the point where hostilities are likely to break out (GMs should know their PCs well enough by now to know the limits of their patience) — if they refuse to answer. She uses any mention of the storm hags, the woodrack dragon, the Dar al Annot, or anything

Hornsaw Sentinel and Hornsaw Unicorn

Encounter Level: 10

Leral Moradroth, female human Rgr6/Hsn3: CR 7; SZ Medium-size humanoid; HD 6d10+12 (Rgr) plus 3d10+6 (Hsn); hp 64; Init +3 (Dex); Spd 30 ft.; AC 18 (+3 Dex, +3 armor, +2 deflection); Atk +14/+9 melee (1d8+4, crit 18–20 (x2), +1 *Hornsaw blade*), or +12/+7 melee (1d8+4, crit 18–20 (x2), +1 *Hornsaw blade*) and +12 melee (1d8+1, crit 18–20 (x2), masterwork *Hornsaw blade*); SA ranger two-weapon fighting, favored enemies (magical beasts +3, elves +2, beasts +1), *Hornsaw proficiency*; SQ *Hornsaw unicorn companion*; AL CN; SV Fort +10, Ref +5, Will +6; Str 17, Dex 16, Con 14, Int 12, Wis 16, Cha 12.

Skills: Animal Empathy +4, Bluff +7, Climb +6, Handle Animal +4, Hide +9, Intuit Direction +4, Jump +6, Knowledge (nature) +4, Knowledge (local: *Hornsaw*) +8, Listen +12 [companion], Move Silently +7, Ride +7, Search +5 [companion], Spot +12 [companion], Wilderness Lore +15 [+19 when tracking, due to companion].

Feats: Alertness, Dodge, Mobility, Mounted Combat, Track, Weapon Focus (scimitar).

Languages: Ledean (*Hornsaw dialect*), Sylvan.

Ranger spells prepared (2/1): 1st — *pass without trace*, *resist elements*; 2nd — *bladethirst***.

Possessions: Masterwork studded leather armor, +1 *Hornsaw alicorn blade*, masterwork *Hornsaw alicorn blade*, *ring of protection* +2, letter from contacts among the Bringers of Autumn.

** From *Relics & Rituals 2: Lost Lore*.

Duzghul, Leral's Hornsaw unicorn companion: CR 7; SZ Large magical beast; HD 10d10+60; HP 113; Init +3 (Dex); Spd 80 ft.; AC 20 (–1 size, +3 Dex, +8 natural); Atk horn +15 melee (2d6+6), bite +13 melee (1d6+3), 2 hooves +13 melee (1d6+3); Face 5 ft. by 10 ft.; Reach 5 ft. (10 ft. with horn); SA enhanced

natural weapons, rage; SQ immunities, SR 16, empathic link, improved evasion, share saving throws, share spells, track, sensitivity; AL CN; SV Fort +13, Ref +10, Will +7; Str 23, Dex 17, Con 22, Int 12, Wis 19, Cha 24.

Skills: Animal Empathy +10, Intimidate +10, Jump +14, Listen +16 [sensitivity], Search +7 [sensitivity], Spot +16 [sensitivity], Wilderness Lore +4 [+19 when tracking, due to *track* and *sensitivity*].

Feats: Cleave, Great Cleave, Multiattack, Power Attack, Track.

Special Attacks: *Enhanced natural weapons (Ex):* Horn, hooves, and teeth are considered +4 weapons for overcoming damage reduction; *Rage (Ex):* A Hornsaw unicorn that takes damage in combat flies into a berserk rage the following round, attacking madly until the end of that combat; it gains +4 Strength, +4 Constitution, a +2 morale bonus to attacks, and –2 AC, and cannot end its rage voluntarily.

Special Qualities: *Immunities (Ex):* Immune to poisons, disease, and charm effects; *Empathic link (Su):* The sentinel has an empathic link with her companion to a distance of 1 mile (this distance is doubled within the *Hornsaw Forest*); the sentinel cannot see through the companion's eyes, but they can communicate telepathically; *Sensitivity (Ex):* While in the *Hornsaw Forest*, both the Hornsaw unicorn and the sentinel receive a +4 circumstance bonus to all Listen, Search, and Spot checks; they also receive a +4 circumstance bonus to Wilderness Lore checks made while tracking.

Source: *Creature Collection*; see also the "Hornsaw Sentinel" prestige class in the appendix herein.

else even remotely connected to them as an excuse to bring up her own interests.

Once anything relevant is mentioned, Leral leans back against Duzghul, a thoughtful look on her face. "You appear to have run afoul of the Dar al Annot. Poor bastards," she quips in her rough Ledean. She smiles, her teeth flashing unnaturally white against her dirt-smeared cheeks. "Still, you don't appear to be running away. Trying to find them, are you? Seeking a bit of retribution? It may be," she mutters, sounding somewhat less aggressive, "that we can help each other.

"I have," she explains, "a vendetta of my own against the storm hags of the Dar al Annot. They killed— hm, someone close to me. I've never had the opportunity to see justice done. If you like," she says excitedly, as though the idea has just occurred to her, "I can show you the way to their citadel, deep in the forest. That is Annot Kalambath, the center of their power. I know the fastest way, and I happen to know, too, that their leader, the Blood Crone, is away at the moment. That doesn't mean the citadel is unguarded, but at least anything you attempt isn't guaranteed suicide."

The players will no doubt be suspicious, given the circumstances. Leral will do everything she can to assuage those suspicions, even explaining the details of her grudge. Only as a last, desperate measure, if it appears the PCs are going to refuse her help, will she admit that she was waiting for them. She will not, under any circumstances, tell them the Bringers of Autumn alerted her, instead saying "The truth is, I have a contact among the Vigils who told me you were coming, and thought we might be able to assist one another — you could complete your quest, and I might have some small piece of my revenge. I didn't wish to tell you of my contact because I do not wish to get him in any trouble for revealing your itinerary."

In the end, the heroes have little choice. They can either take Leral up on her offer, or wander through the Hornsaw Forest, trying to find their own way.

The journey to the fortress of the Dar al Annot is long and difficult. The Serpent Citadel is located deep in the forest; see the map accompanying this chapter. Given the distance, the thickness of the growth, and the difficulty of the terrain — which is nearly as uneven here as in the Haggard Hills — the party requires a full week to reach it.

The sentinel herself is poor company. She is rude, unfriendly, arrogant, and spiteful. She backs down from any argument only if she feels she's at risk of alienating the party so badly that they'll refuse to

Troubleshooting the Sentinel

Often, players don't tend to react entirely as they're expected to. Since this scenario can go wrong in a number of ways, GMs are encouraged to keep contingencies in mind. Some of the most likely are as follows:

The heroes attack Duzghul and/or Leral.

Leral doesn't want to fight, but she will defend herself. Even as she fights, however, she will shout for the PCs to stop, saying she must speak with them. Under these circumstances, she won't even pretend that she wasn't waiting for them, but will immediately make her offer. If she cannot talk the characters out of fighting her, she attempts to escape. When she runs, she does so in the direction of the Ophidian Vale, hoping to lead the PCs to Annot Kalambath if they follow long enough.

The heroes refuse to speak with her, offering her no opportunity to make her offer of aid.

If the PCs seem likely to depart without having given her an opening in the conversation, Leral abandons her plan to pretend the meeting is coincidence, and immediately makes her offer of assistance.

The heroes flatly refuse to accept her aid.

It may be that, even though their only other option is to wander aimlessly, the PCs don't trust Leral enough to accept her help. In this case, she shadows the party, fleeing if discovered. She takes every opportunity to maneuver around them, leaving an obvious trail ahead of the PCs whenever possible, hoping to subtly lead them to the citadel despite themselves.

accept her guidance any further. She and Duzghul will fight alongside the party if they're attacked, but if a battle appears hopeless, they will attempt to flee.

Finally, after a nightmarish trek through the outlandish and corrupted wood, Leral pushes aside a thick cluster of hanging, vine-like tendrils with the tip of one of her weapons.

"We are here," she whispers, her voice hoarse and perhaps even slightly shaken. "Annot Kalambath."

The sentinel steps aside, allowing the PCs to move forward and see close up just what it is they've taken on....

Chapter Two: The Dark Heart of the Wood

Peering past Leral through the opening in the foliage, the characters can finally see the mighty Citadel of Serpents in all its horrid splendor — and the sight is remarkable, indeed. Rising up into the sky like a defiant claw is a tree larger than any of them could have believed existed (unless one has been to Vera-Tre). The giant tree sits in the center of a massive bowl-shaped depression, around the lip of which is a ring of foliage that marks both the perimeter of Annot Kalambath and the beginning of the Hornsaw proper. It is at a spot behind this ring of foliage that the characters now stand.

The party cannot see the uppermost branches of the enormous plant due to a green mist that spreads its pall over the entire area. This sickly fog thickens as altitude increases around the tree, but is still pervasive enough even at ground level to be visible to the naked eye. (Characters suffer a -2 penalty to Spot checks for every 10-foot increment, rather than the usual -1 .)

This mist only serves to further darken the area around the citadel, already dark in mid-day from the significant tree and cloud cover... and worse. Hanging from the lower branches of the tree, in a grisly canopy of rot and death, are the remains of those who have displeased the witches of the Serpent Citadel. This bitter crop is picked at by the foul, corvine beasts that call the boughs home until such time as the rotting tethers break, sending the bodies to fall like overripe fruit to the basin floor below.

What is visible, however, is the unnatural influence of the Dar al Annot upon this once-vibrant home of the Broadreach elves. Around the base of the tree is a latticework of lichen bowers, once formed of living wicker by painstaking hands, now grown over with tough, thorny vines and dusty lichens and molds. Today, these bowers house all manner of Dar al Annot servants.

From their place at the lip of the basin, the PCs can see light coming from somewhere within. The characters can also see a network of burrows dug deep into the heartwood of the tree. These betray no obvious activity at the moment, but it is clear that the burrows serve some dark purpose for the citadel, and their very presence sends a chill down the spine of any good-hearted observer. Lastly, a number of enormous thatched mats are visible at regular intervals along the surface of the tree's mighty roots, including one not far from where the PCs now stand. These mats

Greatest of Serpentholds

Annot Kalambath is arguably the mightiest of all serpentholds in the Scarred Lands (see *The Divine and the Defeated*, p. 210, for details on serpentholds). A place of great power, it has a number of unique traits (where the information from *Hornsaw: Forest of Blood* and this book differ, these take precedence):

- Due to its power, druids of Mormo may actually feed their True Rituals part of the ineffable power of the Serpentmother that has seeped into Annot Kalambath. In game terms, druids who worship Mormo pay only 75% of the usual XP cost for True Rituals cast here.

- Druids of Mormo who use the *wild shape* ability to assume a serpent form may become serpents of one size larger than they are normally allowed. Thus, a 5th-level druid of Mormo could become a Large snake, while a 15th-level druid of Mormo could become a Gargantuan snake.

- Poisons administered within the area have their save DCs increased by +4. Similarly, spells that inflict poison effects or deal acid damage have their spell save DC increased by +4.

- Spells that summon serpents call twice the usual number of serpents as normal (as per normal serpentholds).

- Certain plant creatures gain regenerative properties (or have their innate regeneration enhanced) within the serpent hold, as described in each individual creature's statistics.

It should be noted, of course, that the portion of Annot Kalambath accessed through the Blackenroot Entrance (area 1) and through which the heroes must search represents only a subcomplex, a small portion of this great serpenthold. This particular area serves primarily as a prison and storage space, although it sees other uses as well. The current story should not require the party to explore any other portions, but GMs should feel free to expand the complex on their own if they feel so inclined.

clearly indicate the presence of a network of subterranean sub-complexes dug out of and into the very root system of the tree.

Approaching the Serpent Citadel

Before the PCs can reasonably proceed, they must first determine where to begin. They know that the Amphora was delivered here, but they do not know where in Annot Kalambath it is currently being held. Unfortunately for the PCs, they do not have very long to figure out what to do: First, because the witches are conducting a ritual when the party arrives, at the end of which they will take the Amphora elsewhere, thus making it much more difficult for the PCs to acquire it later. Second, the Hornsaw is wracked with dangers aplenty, and the longer the PCs stand around at the edge of Annot Kalambath, the greater the chance that they will be discovered or killed or both.

Of a more immediate concern, the witches of the Dar al Annot have cultivated a large patch of serpent root (see **Creature Collection**) around the perimeter of the basin, and the longer the party tarries here, the more life the serpent root will drain from them. In addition, small patrols of asaathi and slitheren depart and return to the citadel at fairly regular intervals, and it is only a matter of time before one of these happens upon the quiescent PCs.

From the sheer numbers they would face, the odds are stacked in favor of the characters dying horribly if they try to rampage their way through the entire citadel, room by room. Thankfully, there are a number of ways in which the PCs can figure out which part of the complex contains the Amphora,

and thus head directly towards it without having to contend with the bulk of the citadel's guards.

Foremost of these methods is simple deductive reasoning. When the woodwreck dragon Sath-Theranus arrived with the Amphora, it set the chest containing the artifact down where it was instructed — on a patch of ground near a blackenroot entrance not far from where the PCs now stand. The rather heavy little chest tamped down the grass where it was laid to rest. Although the chest was moved soon after, the stiff grass where it sat has remained more or less in the same shape. Any PC who succeeds in a Spot check (DC 19) notices this rectangular depression in the grass near the blackenroot entrance. From there, it's a safe conclusion to assume that the Amphora was taken below.

If no PC succeeds in this initial Spot check, the DM should allow each character another chance when he or she gets nearer the site itself (this time at DC 15). If absolutely necessary, the GM may use some other device to have the PCs find the spot, such as having Leral come forward furtively at this point (ostensibly to see what the PCs are doing) and happen to notice the spot.

One way or another, though, regardless of the Spot check results, the party should eventually be able to make their way (quietly) to Area 1. Leral offers to wait in the woods for the party's return (if they are reasonably expeditious), but in no event will she herself agree to venture into the bowels of Annot



Kalambath. The characters are very much on their own.

The Blackenroot Entrance (1)

Encounter Level: 5

When the party gets a little closer to the blackenroots, they can make out three shapes leaning haphazardly near the entrance. Those with lowlight vision can make out that these are humanoid bodies, bound and staked into the dirt.

Some time ago, the Citadel suffered one of the worst security breaches in its history, when a handful of Denev's druids sneaked onto the grounds and into the very sub-complex the characters now approach. One of their own, a high-ranking priestess named Allegara, had been captured by the Dar al Annot and was being tortured in the prison cells below (torture being the primary function of this particular sub-complex). Through sheer determination (and a bit of luck) the druids managed to make good their escape with their compatriot, and the three Dar al Annot in charge of the complex's security at the time were executed and staked outside the entrance as a lesson to all those who would falter in their vigilance of the citadel.

The head warden in charge of the sub-complex at the time was a cultist named Boaz. Boaz's own guilt, coupled with the place and manner of his execution, returned him to the vigilance he allowed lapse in life (although others blame the Hag Queen's witches for his reanimation). Whatever the cause, the fact remains that Boaz returned to a state of unlife (or undeath) shortly after his execution. He is now a memory-eater — a pathetic yet dangerous creature that seeks only to regain its former life, and which, indeed, does not fully comprehend its own passing.

When the PCs approach, one of the bound and staked figures stirs, its drooping head rising meekly to survey the party. This creature immediately begins pleading with whoever seems the most kindly (most likely a female and/or a priest).

He introduces himself as Boaz and answers honestly about himself. He does not relate the part about being executed, however, as he is not consciously aware of it. To his knowledge, he and his underlings were staked out here to die of thirst and he is the only one left alive — although he “will surely die if not freed soon.”

Spells such as *detect lie* do not reveal any falsehood in Boaz's statements. He truly does not know he is dead and does want to be free of this terrible torture.

Any spell or effect that detects life reveal the truth, of course — namely, that Boaz *has* none. Sadly, even such a revelation does not deter the creature's pleas. If the PCs refuse to free Boaz, he threatens to alert the others. He reasons that if he atones for his



earlier lack of vigilance by being vigilant now, even while under such punishment, then the witches may take pity on him and release him.

Likely, the PCs will have to either free the creature or kill it in order to prevent it from alerting the Dar al Annot to the presence of the intruders. Those who choose the former, however, will find their kindness rewarded with brutality. As befits its ghoulish nature, the ravenous creature seeks to feast on their precious lives and memories as soon as it is freed. Interestingly, a simple gagging device would probably suffice to avert this (so long as it is made of stern enough stuff to withstand being chewed through), and the GM might reward such ingenuity with bonus XP at the conclusion of the adventure.

Memory-Eater

CR 5; SZ Medium-size undead; HD 8d12; hp 56; Init +6 (+2 Dex, +4 Improved Initiative); Spd 30 ft.; AC 15 (+2 Dex, +3 natural); Atk bite +7 melee (1d8+3), 2 claws +2 melee (1d4+1); SA create spawn; SQ memory eating, undead; AL CE; SV Fort +2, Ref +4, Will +8; Str 17, Dex 15, Con —, Int 16, Wis 14, Cha 16.

Skills: Climb +9, Escape Artist +9, Hide +8, Intuit Direction +7, Jump +8, Listen +10, Move Silently +9, Search +8, Spot +12.

Feats: Alertness, Cleave, Expertise, Improved Initiative, Power Attack.

Create spawn (Su): Creatures slain by a memory eater return as memory-eaters in 1d6 days.

Memory eating (Ex): When devouring a victim, the memory-eater consumes images and memories of the victim.

Source: **Creature Collection**. Note that this particular specimen is tougher (8 HD) and stronger (Str 17) than most.

The Tunnel of Screams (2)

Descending into the root system beneath the basin floor is a dank earthen corridor, poorly lit and measuring less than 5 feet across at its widest point. The tunnel seems to twist unnecessarily and descend erratically, as though trying to adhere to some special shape. In truth, the tunnel was designed with the peripheral roots of the tree as its borders; where the roots turn, so too does the passage, and characters who make a Spot check (DC 16) will notice the protruding, blackened wood of the roots all around them as they descend.

In addition, some of the finer roots, which connect the rooms, have been carefully hollowed out. This has the effect of creating a makeshift ventilation system, carrying air from the surface. The Tunnel of

Screams gets its name from the way the ventilated root system ferries the cries of those held prisoner below to the tunnels above. Since the roots are at their most voluminous nearest the top, this initial descent is a veritable echo chamber of shrieks, moans, and sobs whenever the witches are at their cruel work — which is the case when the party arrives.

In all, the tunnel descends roughly 15 feet over the course of its nearly 30-foot length.

Main Chamber (3)

The tunnel opens up into a large, irregularly-shaped cavern approximately 30 feet wide, 20 feet deep, and roughly 12 feet high. As the PCs reach the doorway, the smell of foliage and damp soil (among other, less natural odors) becomes more pronounced, and they notice that a gorgeous eave of vines dangles over the entrance to this room (where Area 2 joins this area). Although it looks lovely, this plant is actually gallows vine placed here by the witches as a security measure. Although anyone who enters is left unmolested, the vine has been “instructed” to ensnare anyone who attempts to *leave* without first saying aloud the name of Mormo. In this way, the cultists have a built-in sentinel to prevent the escape of prisoners detained here.

The north side of the chamber is actually a set of four tunnels leading farther into the earth. These tunnels lead to Areas 5, 7, 8 and 9, respectively.

When the PCs arrive in Area 3, they find it unoccupied except for a well-rendered mural along the northeast wall leading to Area 9. The mural depicts a majestic Mormo towering over all the major humanoid races of Scarn. In one hand she holds a wicked scourge, held back at the ready; in the other she clutches an enormous brass key, engraved with eldritch sigils and runes of power. The twin orbs of her eyes are also the room’s only source of light, suffusing the entire area in a dim pall of unearthly green light. (This effect is created by two permanent *light* spells, both cast at the 14th level of ability.)

The rest of the room, including the ceiling but not the floor, is covered with overgrown roots, brambles, and vines, covering all solid rock except that which displays the mural of Mormo.

The entrance to Area 4 (on the northwest wall) is actually a 1-foot thick wall of brambles covering the opening to a hidden fifth tunnel. For detection purposes, the bramble wall counts as a secret door (Search DC 17), although there is no mundane way for PCs to get past it aside from destroying it. Tiny creatures may make an Escape Artist check (DC 15) to squeeze through, and Diminutive or Fine creatures can pass through freely. Druids of 2nd level or higher can pass freely through the overgrowth due to their woodland stride ability, making this a perfect secret

way for the druids of Annot Kalamboth to reach the prison's lower level.

Wall of Brambles: Thickness 12 inches; hardness 3; hp 30 (only slashing, acid, cold, or fire damage applies). Anyone cutting through the wall with weapons takes 10 points of damage, minus a number of points equal to any armor or deflection bonuses to AC they might have. Thus, a character in full plate (+8 AC) would only take 2 points of damage from cutting his way through the wall. Due to magic of the serpenthold that has been channeled into the wall, it regenerates any damage to itself at a rate of 1 hit point per round; it cannot regenerate acid or fire damage in this way.

Gallows Vine

Encounter Level: 2

CR 2; SZ Large plant; HD 4d8+12; hp 36; Init +0; Spd 0 ft.; AC 16 (+6 natural); Atk 4 touches +7 melee (grab); Face 5 ft. by 5 ft.; Reach 30 ft.; SA improved grab, constrict 1d4+7; SQ regenerate 3, blindsight, plant; AL N; SV Fort +7, Ref +1, Will -2; Str 21, Dex 10, Con 16, Int —, Wis 4, Cha 1.

Improved grab (Ex): This gallows vine has 4 tendrils with which it may attack. Any creature of Tiny to Medium-size that attempts to exit the room without first saying "Mormo" aloud is subject to 1d4 tendril attacks. If an attack hits, the prey is grappled by the gallows vine and hauled 20 feet up to the chamber's ceiling; in subsequent rounds, the vine may constrict. Victims cannot pull themselves free of a vine by main strength: only slashing, acid, cold, or fire damage of at least 10 points will free a tendril's victim (who may then suffer 1d6 falling damage).

Constrict (Ex): The gallows vine deals 1d4+7 points of damage with a successful grapple check.

Blindsight (Ex): The gallows vine is capable of detecting fine changes in air pressure, temperature, and vibration through its vines, allowing it to discern prey within 10 feet of any of its tendrils.

Regenerate (Su): Due to magic of the serpenthold that has been channeled into the gallows vine, it takes normal damage only from acid or fire.

Source: Creature Collection 2: Dark Menagerie, p. 78. Where statistics between this sidebar and *Creature Collection 2* differ, this sidebar's information takes precedence. Note also that this particular specimen has the ability to regenerate, unlike normal gallows vines; this ability increases its CR to 2.

Druid's Passage (4)

Those who make it past the wall of brambles in Area 3 are deposited into a short, dark tunnel that is even more overgrown than the rest of the complex. Without a light source of their own, the characters will surely wade straight into a thicket of serpent root

that has been placed here to guard the tunnel to the prison's lower level (which lies some 30 feet ahead at the end of the tunnel). This plant guardian allows any druid of Mormo to pass, but anyone else is in for some trouble as the serpent root grabs hold and attempts to strangle the life out of them.

Fortunately for the characters, the serpent root does not constitute an alarm (merely a security precaution), and it will not alert any cultists to the presence of those it trespassing in its tunnel. Assuming the PCs survive this encounter, they can follow the corridor to its end, at an earthen staircase that descends to Area 11.

Serpent Root

Encounter Level: 4

CR 4; SZ Large plant; HD 4d8+20; hp 38; Init -2 (Dex); Spd 0 ft.; AC 11 (-1 size, -2 Dex, +4 natural); Atk tendril lash +3 melee (1d8+1); Face 5 ft. by 10 ft.; Reach 5 ft.; SA improved grab, constrict 1d6+1, vitality drain; SQ plant, damage reduction 5/+1, regeneration 5; AL N; SV Fort +9, Ref -1, Will +1; Str 12, Dex 6, Con 20, Int —, Wis 10, Cha 10.

Special Attacks: Improved grab (Ex): To use this ability, the serpent root must hit an opponent of up to Medium-size with a tendril attack. If it gets a hold, it can constrict; *Constrict (Ex):* A serpent root deals 1d6+1 points of damage with a successful grapple check; *Vitality drain (Ex):* The serpent root deals 1 point of damage per day to all living creatures within 60 feet.

Special Qualities: Regeneration (Ex): Fire and acid attacks deal normal damage to a serpent root. Due to magic of the serpenthold that has been channeled into the gallows vine, its normal rate of regeneration (1 hp per round) has been increased to 5 hp per round.

Source: Creature Collection. Note that this particular specimen has a higher CR than usual due to its improved regeneration ability.

Cell Block (5)

The first tunnel leading out of the Main Chamber seems well-worn, as though traveled extensively. The tunnel descends at a slight angle (about 20 degrees), and after about 30 feet opens up into a chamber of sorts with a wooden door set into the north wall. On the west wall hang three sets of manacles, spaced evenly, each with a length of chain running through an iron ring set into the wall about 7 feet up. Against the east wall is a small oaken table and a set of three chairs. From the looks of it, the table sees as much use as a whittling project as it does anything else. Lying atop it is a scroll case. Indeed, they are in luck, for this is the case that was carried by Commander Piridur: the scroll on

which *The Song of Unmaking* is scribed is still within. Apparently, the druids either didn't take the time to examine it fully, or — more likely — simply set it aside for later study.

Set into the wall beside the table is what looks to be a second scroll (actually a papyrus made from human skin) bearing a sequence of red, faintly glowing symbols in the figure of an upside down "U." There is no one presently in *this area* when the PCs arrive. The symbols are actually numbers in the titans' dialect, numbers which happen (although the PCs are not likely to realize it at first) to be the numbers of the cells in Area 6, beyond the north door.

The oaken door on the north wall (leading to Area 6) seems out of place against the dark backdrop of roots and soil, but it is nonetheless a working door. An iron-reinforced wooden crossbar rests in a nook on either side of the door, just over an opening for a key above the door's iron handle. The most curious thing about the door is the small round mirror set into it above the crossbar, at about head height for an average human.

If a character looks into the mirror, he will realize that he is actually looking *through* the door. The mirror is not glass, however, and after an instant the viewer will sense that something is strange about the portal from the perspective it offers him: he sees the rows of cells beyond, but he sees them from *above*.

If a character viewing the mirror calls out (in the Titan tongue, of course) one of the glowing numbers etched onto the flesh-scroll on the east wall, the mirror's image shimmers to a new perspective, as though the viewer were looking down into the cell he just named. Through this method, a viewer may scan the contents of each cell in Area 6 without ever having to open the door. If the PCs figure this out, they will soon find that only one of the cells is currently occupied.

Although the door does have a keyhole, it is not currently locked, but merely barred.

Iron-bound oaken door: Thickness 3 inches; hardness 5; hp 40; Break DC 28.

Prisoner Holding Cells (6)

Unlike most of the complex, this area has its own illumination, being bathed in a soft reddish glow that comes from the ceiling. The tunnel extends about 30 feet, with holding cells along *both sides* and one at the end of the hall, for a total of seven cells. The floors of the cells are covered in old dry straw, and several varieties of vermin scurry about. The doors to the cells are

simple affairs (anyone with an appropriate skill can determine that they were each forged from a single piece of iron). Each cell also contains an old wooden cot, covered in splinters, among other assorted detritus.

In the last cell on the left (Cell #3, according to the skin-scroll) sits the only remaining prisoner: a female wood elf, about 5 feet in height, with stringy brown hair and terrified, pale eyes. When any PC steps into view, she immediately shrieks and scuttles backwards to the rear wall of her cell.

If the PCs can calm her down (Diplomacy DC 18), she introduces herself as Mina, a native of the Hornsaw. With a bit of gentle prodding and some assurance that she will be freed, Mina relates that she and her partner, a half-elf named Arnaud, were captured by a Dar al Annot patrol.

Mina knows much about what goes on in the complex, and can provide the PCs with information about a number of topics. She knows that the cultists acquired something very special recently, and she knows it's being kept somewhere in the complex. She also knows why nobody else is around: The Dar al Annot have taken every other prisoner to a place called "the arena," there to be executed in Mormo's name during some ceremonial rite. If asked why she wasn't similarly condemned, she shudders and whispers, "I think they have other plans for me."

This is true, but probably not for the reason the PCs believe. In truth, Mina is a strife elemental, and the witches are "saving" her for later use (currently, their plan is to release her near an enemy stronghold when her nature will prove most advantageous to the cult and to Mormo).

If asked specifically about Commander Piridur — a fair description of him will help — she confirms that he was indeed a prisoner here for a short time. He must have been someone special since he was given the "fancy suite," she says, indicating Cell #4 (which is slightly bigger than the others). She relates that he was taken away earlier this day, with the rest of the prisoners.

If the PCs ask about her skills, she admits to being competent with a sword and will gleefully tag along.

Mina is not evil and is genuinely glad to be freed of her captivity. She cannot help her nature, however, and prolonged exposure to her chaotic presence is sure to exact a high toll from the party — if not sooner, then most assuredly later.

Mina, Strife Elemental

Encounter Level: 1 (unarmed and unarmored)

CR 2; SZ Medium-size elemental; HD 4d8+4; hp 22; Init +1 (Dex); Spd 30 ft., fly 30 ft. (perfect); AC 14 (+1 Dex, +3 natural); Atk +3 melee (1d3 subdual, unarmed); SA cause strife; SQ elemental, damage reduction 10/+1, impersonate; AL CN; SV Fort +5, Ref +2, Will +1; Str 11, Dex 13, Con 13, Int 10, Wis 10, Cha 10.

Skills: Hide +4, Listen +4, Move Silently +6, Read Lips +6, Spot +6.

Feats: Dodge, Mobility.

Special Attacks: *Cause strife (Ex):* Whenever a situation unfolds that might warrant a contentious, argumentative, or violent course of action, all within 30 feet of the elemental must succeed in a Will save (DC 12) to resist being compelled along such a path. This is a mind-affecting compulsion. This power should be handled subtly, and the GM should roll on the PCs' behalf.

Special Qualities: *Impersonate (Su):* The strife elemental can take a new form, whereupon it may redistribute its skills and feats. Each change takes 5 minutes.

Source: *Creature Collection*

Witches' Barracks (7)

Like the other tunnels leading out of Area 3, this one descends at about a 20 degree slope into the earth. After about 50 feet, the tunnel opens up into a large, vaguely hemispherical chamber about 25 feet wide at its thickest. A dozen cots line the far wall at fairly regular intervals, and the stench of human filth is nearly overpowering. The only relief comes from the presence of various herbs, plants, and incenses that would themselves be an assault on the senses, were it not for their olfactory competition from less desirable sources.

Midway through the room, along the western wall, stands an enormous three-legged cauldron made of iron. The legs seem to be fashioned in the form of snakes, each ending in a different head (one viper, one cobra, and one asp). Although the coals beneath it are not currently glowing brightly, neither are they entirely cool. They glow a faint red from within, indicating recent use, and quiet bubbling noises can be heard coming from inside the kettle. A long wooden ladle protrudes from its open top and if any PC can gather the nerve to go and see what's cooking, his curiosity will be rewarded with a brew most vile: The ladle stirs up a heady bouquet of rancidness, for this is a stew made from choice cuts of human internal organs and a simmering broth of biological humors.

If the party has the time (and stomach) to search the room thoroughly, they will uncover a collection of 197 gp, 231 sp, 95 cp and a plethora of disgusting trinkets.

Interrogation Chamber (8)

This is where the cultists who oversee this subcomplex bring prisoners for interrogation — and, just as often, for a bit of cruel fun. Due to space constraints, this area also doubles as a council room, where the head warden can go over security issues and incoming orders with his prison guards. The room also functions, perhaps most offensively, as a *dining hall*. Due to a number of factors (including a most disgusting diet), this place reeks of unwholesomeness, and it is apparent at first whiff that nothing here has been cleaned in some time.

Pushed against the western wall is a long oaken table, currently covered in scraps of meat, paper, and who knows what else. If a character takes the time to search through this detritus (Search DC 14), he will discover a scroll containing the spell *bed bug bites* (*Relics & Rituals 2: Lost Lore*, p. 88) lying almost haphazardly amongst the other papers. Other than that, there is nothing of value on the table.

Instruments of torture most vile take up the remainder of the available space in this room. A wall rack contains numerous whips, scourges, thumbscrews, eye-hooks, prods, pincers, and knives of every kind. Another smaller worktable displays a rather well used set of bellows, yellow with age and caked in gore. Placed almost reverently beside it is an iron mask, apparently fresh from use.

In the northeast corner of the room is another passage (more a hole in the floor than anything) that leads down to Area 10. It is through this room that prisoners are led to the arena. The witches find this practice riotous, as each prisoner is afforded the courtesy of viewing for one last time the implements of his own torture before being sent below to entertain his captors with his own death.

Warden's Quarters (9)

Like most of the other tunnels in the sub-complexes of Annot Kalambath, this room has no actual door. That is not to say that the warden's quarters are unprotected. Anchored to the floor about 5 feet before the entrance to the bedroom proper rests an active *snare* spell. Anyone setting off the spell also triggers a secondary chain of events in motion, whereby the very act of setting off the snare lifts the lid on several crates inside the room, allowing their contents to slip free....

The warden, a psychotic druid/sorcerer named D'kaell, is currently away on business of the Blood Crone. Like many worshippers of Mormo, D'kaell has an affinity for serpents. Unlike many other worshippers of Mormo, D'kaell also has a fondness for transforming other sentient beings *into* serpents. Those whom he has tortured often end up as additions to his private collection of snakes — which he then keeps

locked away in his chambers as personal pets. When the *snare* spell goes off, all of D'kaell's "beauties" are set free... most of which are quite angry, indeed.

If D'kaell's pets are dealt with, the party finds a small iron coffer underneath his rotted mattress (which sits against the northeast wall). It is locked, but not trapped.

Iron Coffer: Hardness 10; hp 15; Break DC 26; Open Lock DC 20.

Inside are 2 druidic scrolls, both scribed at caster level 8. One contains the spell *decompose*** and the other holds 2 spells, *cold snap** and *serpents' stare***. Additionally, there are 2 *potions of neutralize poison*. A pouch beneath these vials contains D'kaell's personal collection of gemstones: 3 rich green gems (emeralds; Appraise DC 12; 200 gp each); 2 dark purple gems (amethysts; Appraise DC 12; 75 gp each); and a rich red gem with dark striations (tiger ruby; Appraise DC 18; 500 gp). Spells marked with an asterisk (*) are from **Relics & Rituals**; those marked with a double asterisk (**) are from **Relics & Rituals 2: Lost Lore**.

Snare Trap

CR 3; creature entering affected square is caught by the snare (see PHB, Chapter 11, "Snare"); no save, no spell resistance; Search (DC 23); Disable Device (DC 28).

Note: When the *snare* triggers, it does so in such a way that it also lifts the lids on the crates holding D'kaell's pet snakes, which immediately attack anyone in the area.

Eight Small Vipers

Encounter Level: 4

CR 1/2; SZ Small animal; HD 1d8; hp 5; Init +3 (Dex); Spd 20 ft., climb 30 ft.; AC 17 (+1 size, +3 Dex, +3 natural); Atk bite +4 melee (1d2-1 and poison); SA poison; SQ scent; AL N; SV Fort +2, Ref +5, Will +1; Str 6, Dex 17, Con 11, Int 1, Wis 12, Cha 2.

Skills: Balance +11, Climb +12, Hide +15, Listen +9, Spot +9.

Feats: Weapon Finesse (bite).

Poison (Ex): Bite, Fort DC 11, initial and secondary 1d6 temp Con.

Source: MM, Animal appendix, "Snake, Small viper."

The Arena (10)

Normally, the warden uses this room to entertain the other cultists. Prisoners are brought here and forced to battle one another in gladiatorial combat. The winner is permitted to live — to fight another day. The room itself is enormous (hence its name) and is typically adorned with little except a huge statue of Mormo against the south wall,

and yet another mural of Mormo flaying the puny divine races, this time on the northwest wall (covering the secret door). In this mural, however, Mormo's free hand is depicted carrying a brooch with a keyhole in it. (Clever PCs might deduce that this means that this wall is a door.)

When the PCs arrive at Annot Kalambath, this room is where all the action is. After being blessed with the recovery of the Amphora, the cultists are preparing for one of their most prized ceremonies — the rite of the wicker man. They build an enormous hollow construct fashioned in the shape of a man. Then, on a special occasion such as this, they fill the construct with prisoners. At the culmination of a lengthy ceremony, they consecrate the spirits of those within to Mormo and set the construct ablaze. The smoke travels up through ventilation holes, carrying the

Piridur's Plight

If the PCs opt not to thwart the ritual and free the prisoners, or if they never find out that Piridur is among them, then they may have just secured their own success and subsequent escape — for, one way or another, Piridur will have his revenge.

When the pyre is lit, the wickerman takes on a dark sentience of its own and become a rampaging construct of hate (see "Wickerman," **Creature Collection 2: Dark Menagerie**, p. 210). Driven by Piridur's vengeful will, the wicker monstrosity attacks the Dar al Annot, spreading fire and death in its wake — and diverting attention away from the PCs.

In the event that the PCs were unaware of Piridur's situation, the GM should include a moment where at least one of the PCs glimpses the Veshian Commander burning within the construct, smiling cruelly as the wickerman lays about with its fiery fists.

If the PCs have known about to Piridur's situation, however, and intentionally opted not to help him, then a different scene might play itself out. In this case, the GM should have a moment where the characters and the wickerman cross paths, as above. In this case, however, the recognition behind the tortured Piridur's eyes turns to spiteful rage as the construct suddenly changes direction — and targets — and begins throwing cultists aside in order to reach the PCs.

Although the GM should take pity and not make the PCs actually fight their old comrade in his new wickerman form, she should try to make the scene as frightful as possible, with emphasis placed on teaching the PCs to face the consequences of their (non-)actions.

pungent stench to the rest of Annot Kalambath and into the haze-filled sky beyond. It is believed that the smoke carries the souls of the victims straight to Mormo's glorious maw.

Unbeknownst to the PCs, their former compatriot — Commander Piridur — is one such “criminal.” When the PCs arrive, the Dar al Annot should be in the middle of the ceremony; the wicker man with its prisoners is set against the south wall, in front of the statue of Mormo, with all the cultists looking on (their eyes away from the entrances to the room).

If the party catches wind of the witches' plans for Piridur (perhaps by seeing him or by way of the strife elemental in Area 6), they are faced with a moral dilemma: If they expose themselves in an attempt to free Piridur and the other condemned prisoners, they might lose their one and only chance at recovering the Amphora. If they do not, however, then they are, by dint of inaction, allowing a good soldier to die (and die, at least indirectly, because of them).

If the PCs somehow manage to rescue Piridur without botching their plans for the Amphora (a difficult prospect at best, but one worthy of true heroes), he is all but useless and can hardly move under his own power. If nursed back to full health (requiring at least a week to recover), he relates having been tortured by the Dar al Annot before being condemned to death and stacked liked human cordwood inside their wicker man.

Note that if the ritual is disrupted, the wickerman does *not* come to life.

Wickerman

Encounter Level: 8

CR 8; SZ Huge construct (fire); HD 14d10; hp 80; Init -1 (Dex); Spd 30 ft.; AC 13 (-2 size, -1 Dex, +6 natural); Atk 2 slams +17 melee (2d6+9 and 1d6 fire); Face 10 ft. by 10 ft.; Reach 15 ft.; SA trample, *fireball*; SQ construct, fire subtype, damage reduction 10/+1, SR 14; AL CE; SV Fort +4, Ref +3, Will +4; Str 28, Dex 9, Con —, Int —, Wis 10, Cha 6.

Trample (Ex): As a standard action, the wickerman may simply run over opponents of Medium-size or less, dealing 2d6+13 points of bludgeoning damage and 1d6 points of fire damage. A target may either make an attack of opportunity at a -4 penalty, or else attempt a Reflex save (DC 26) for half damage.

Fireball (Su): 3/day (not more often than every 1d4+1 rounds) — The wickerman can launch an effect identical to a *fireball*, as the spell cast by a 14th-level sorcerer (Reflex half, DC 15). It often detonates this effect on itself, as it is immune to fire.

Fire subtype (Ex): Fire immunity; double damage from cold- or water-based attacks except on a successful save.

Source: **Creature Collection 2: Dark Menagerie**, p. 210. Where statistics between this sidebar and **Creature Collection 2** differ, this sidebar's information takes precedence



Private Staircase (11)

The winding descent from the druid's passage (Area 4) deposits travelers into a dark, earthen nook about 10 feet in diameter. Although there is a secret door on the southeast wall leading to the arena (Area 10), the Dar al Annot never use it when prisoners are in the arena, instead preferring to use this winding passage back up to the top level, go over to the interrogation chamber (Area 8), and then proceed down into the arena.

Security is important here, and every precaution is taken when it comes to safeguarding the existence of the Nexus (Area 13). All the same, the door to the arena is clearly marked from this side and requires no checks to discover.

Blocked Corridors (12)

About 50 feet south of the stairwell, the hallway appears to end abruptly. When the characters get close enough, however, they realize that it simply turns to the west. If they follow it, they soon discover that this passage does end abruptly, about 20 feet west of the turn.

This tunnel used to connect to the area's neighboring sub-complex, but when the area was inaugurated as a prison/interrogation ward, the witches had the passage sealed off to prevent access from either direction. Now, the surface entrance at Area 1 is the only (easy) way in or out of the complex. By virtue of its construction, it is evident that this hall used to lead somewhere, but it is no longer a viable passageway. It is now separated from its former neighbor by over 20 feet of magically shaped earth and rock.

The same cannot be said of the "dead end" where the passage from Area 11 turned west. What appears to be yet another wall of impassable rock and roots is actually a magical door. It is not an illusion, and thus cannot be disbelieved, and any attempts to damage it fail miserably (the wall has hardness 6 and 350 hit points, and regenerates 10 hit points per round, in any event). However, striking at the wall should give the party some indication that it is special, prompting additional (and hopefully less violent) ideas in the PCs.

Ultimately, the wall is similar to the hidden doorway in Area 3. Anyone who attempts to walk through the wall can actually do so, as with the *meld into stone* spell — except she may actually pass all the way through, arriving after

1 full round on the other side at the entrance to Area 13.

Since the PCs must pass through this wall if they are to acquire the Amphora, the GM can take pity on them if they get stuck and drop them a hint. The GM might point out the fact that this wall, unlike others in the complex, has no brambles or sharp root edges; or perhaps a PC might lean casually against the wall, only to find himself sliding into it... Similarly, if the PCs have a *locate object* spell active, the GM should have its magic prod them in the right direction — toward the other side of the wall.

The Nexus of Mormo (13)

This vaguely oval-shaped chamber is the current resting place of the Amphora. It is at this room that the PCs must ultimately arrive if they are to succeed in their goal. When they arrive at the entrance to this cave, they are greeted by a startling site: A seemingly unguarded chamber containing nothing but the object they seek, resting easily in a chest on the floor in the center of the room. The truth, of course, is not as it seems.

This is no ordinary room. In fact, the room itself is the Amphora's sole guardian: it is what is known as a Titanic Nexus — in this case, a Nexus of the titan Mormo.

A Titanic Nexus is created when a significant portion of a fallen titan's essence infuses itself within a specific locality or natural phenomenon. Several such places exist within the crater upon which Annot Kalambath sits (roughly one for each of the Citadel's subcomplexes). This, the prison ward's Nexus, is actually not the most potent of these Nexuses, nor is it the least. Still, it is one of "purest" sites of Mormo's being — if the word *pure* can ever be used to describe the Witch-Queen — anywhere on Scarn. Indeed, it thrums not only with Mormo's power, but with her fell *consciousness* as well.

(In technical terms, each of Mormo's Nexuses is the equivalent of an immobile tendriculos; see below.)

The Nexus gives up the chest freely to anyone who speaks the appropriate command word (in this case, the word for "regurgitate" in the Dark Speech of Mormo). It views as an enemy anyone walking over to the chest without first speaking the appropriate word. In this event, the chest seemingly sinks into the floor just as the character reaches for it, and in its place sprouts a giant maw filled with razor sharp branches and long thorns.

Nexus of Mormo

Encounter Level: 9

CR 9; SZ Huge plant; HD 10d8+60; hp 113; Init -1 (Dex); Spd 0 ft.; AC 16 (-2 size, -1 Dex, +9 natural); Atk bite +13 melee (2d8+9), 2 tendrils +8 melee (1d6+4); Face 25 ft. by 15 ft.; Reach 15 ft.; SA improved grab, swallow whole, paralysis, smite godspawn; SQ plant, regeneration 15, darkvision 60 ft., cold and fire resistance 15, damage reduction 5/+2, SR 20, turn vulnerability; AL NE; SV Fort +12, Ref +2, Will +2; Str 28, Dex 9, Con 22, Int 3, Wis 8, Cha 3.

Improved grab (Ex): If a Nexus of Mormo hits with its bite attack, it can deal bite damage and then try to swallow an opponent. It can also grab by hitting with a tendril attack, after which it will transfer the victim to its “mouth” as a standard action, automatically dealing bite damage as above.

Swallow whole/paralysis (Ex): The Nexus can try to swallow any opponent of Large or smaller size that it has grabbed by making a successful grapple check. Once inside the plant’s mass, the opponent must succeed at a Fortitude save (DC 22) or be paralyzed for 3d6 rounds by digestive juices, during which it will take 2d6 points of acid damage per round. A new save is required each round. A swallowed creature that avoids paralysis can climb out of the mass with a successful grapple check, which returns it to the plant’s maw, where another grapple check is required to break free.

Swallowed creatures can also cut their way out by using a Small or Tiny slashing weapon to inflict 25 points of damage to the creature’s interior (AC 15). The plant’s mass can hold two Large, four Medium-size, or eight Small opponents.

Smite godspawn (Su): 1/day — The Nexus can make a normal attack to deal additional damage equal to its HD against a non-titanspawn foe.

Regeneration (Ex): Due to magic of the serpenthold, the Nexus regenerates 15 hp per round. Acid deals normal damage to a Nexus of Mormo. If it loses part of its body mass, it can regrow it in 1d6 minutes. Holding the severed portion against the mass enables it to reattach instantly.

Turn vulnerability (Ex): Due to the Nexus’s titanic essence, it can be turned by clerics of any of the Scarred Lands’ gods as they would normally turn undead; further, being a plant creature, the Nexus can be turned as usual by any cleric with the Plant domain.

Source: MM. For all intents and purposes, a Nexus of Mormo is the equivalent of an immobile tendriculos (this particular one having 10 HD) with the fiendish template, except that its smite good ability instead applies against all non-titanspawn and it also gains turn vulnerability. Its CR has been increased by an additional +1 due to its enhanced regeneration ability (caused by the magic of the serpenthold).

Such a character is almost certainly taken by surprise. Rather than making Spot or Listen checks to determine surprise in this situation, instead have the PCs each make a Reflex save opposed to the Nexus’s attack roll. This reflects the character’s ability to avoid the creature’s sudden attack in time. Any PC who wins the check may roll initiative (along with the Nexus, which cannot be surprised) in this first surprise round and take a single action, as usual. Otherwise, that character is flat-footed during this surprise round. The Nexus attempts to bite the closest PC with its first action and tries to swallow the intruder whole.

If the Nexus is reduced to 0 hp, the central maw yawns wide, the entire room shuddering in what are apparently its death throes, then spits up the chest containing the Amphora (as well as any swallowed PCs). At this point, the party had better make haste in its escape, as several of the Citadel’s druids are attuned to this unholy room and will sense its defeat.

As a guideline, give the party a full 4d4 rounds to get out of the complex before trouble arrives. If the PCs have not thwarted the rite of the wickerman in Area 10, this time may be extended (or at least the forces reduced), as the Dar al Annot will surely have other problems with which to contend by this time.

Chapter Three:

The Shattering of the Amphora

Bloodied and battered, the heroes finally emerge from the treacherous depths of the Serpent Citadel. Vian Piridur is most likely dead, but his sacrifice need not have been in vain. The PCs now have everything they require — the *Song of Unmaking* and the Serpent Amphora itself — to destroy the hated artifact once and for all and strip the servants of the Witch-Queen of one of their greatest relics.

Assuming, of course, they survive long enough to reach the Ganjus and the Jordeh druids who await them.

Flight

As she promised, Leral Moradroth and her companion beast await the heroes in the forest near the entrance to the citadel. Her reasons for remaining have nothing to do with loyalty, and she'd be more than happy to leave the party to its fate. The message from the Bringers of Autumn stated that the heroes were to escape, however, and she's not going to offend her allies by completing only half her task.

"Quickly!" she hisses the instant they appear. "We cannot stay here. The Dar al Annot are hardly going to abandon the hunt merely because you've wiped out their local garrison. Move! Move!"

Troubleshooting: What Is *She* Doing Here?

Depending on how the players reacted to Leral in Chapter One, it's possible that they've arrived at the Citadel without accepting her help. Perhaps she led them here indirectly, pretending to run from them. Perhaps the party managed to avoid her, or even killed her, and found their way here through some other means (such as *Speak with Animals*, or other magics).

If they refused to work with her before, she still awaits the party near the citadel, but she does so in hiding. If she is not detected, she follows them on their way through the Hornsaw, revealing herself only if they require her aid to survive an encounter. If she's discovered — either because a PC spots her or after she's revealed herself in combat — she again attempts to explain that she merely wishes to see the party safely out of the forest.

If Leral is dead, she clearly cannot be awaiting the party at this point. They must escape to the Ganjus without her aid, which makes the upcoming battle with Hielaa that much more difficult.

Unless they decide not to run for some reason, the PCs enter into a nightmare of fear and exhaustion. The Hornsaw Forest seems, if anything, more hostile than before, as if angry at the heroes for daring to penetrate its depths. Branches catch at clothes and tear at unprotected skin; roots seem to protrude deliberately where they will turn ankles or catch hooves; the birds and animals squawk and squeal loudly when the heroes require silence, as though deliberately trying to attract the attentions of the forest's many predators.

Even in their haste, and even with Leral's guidance, it requires a full week to reach the northern boundary of the wood, just as it did to penetrate to the Citadel in the first place.

Death From Above

Despite the potential random encounters, the PCs may consider themselves fortunate when, on the afternoon of the seventh day, the trees around them begin to thin and they can see, beyond the foliage, the dull rolling terrain of the Haggard Hills. It's somewhat dark, despite the time of day, as the sky is leaden with ponderous clouds. An occasional flash of lightning illuminates one or another of those clouds, as though a will-o-wisp dwelt within.

"We must part here," Leral tells them, one hand scratching the thick fur on Duzghul's neck. "The Hornsaw is my home, and I'll not leave it just for you lot. If you travel just a bit north of northeast, you should reach the Ganjus in no more than five—"

Hornsaw Encounters Redux

Although no planned encounters occur during this portion of the heroes' flight, that doesn't mean they aren't going to encounter opposition. The GM should continue to make use of the Hornsaw Forest Random Encounters Chart (see Chapter One), with the following modifications:

The chances of a random encounter increase from 8% per hour to 10%, or from 48% per 6 hours to 60%.

Any "storm hag" or "woodwreck dragon" encounter should be rerolled or else treated as no encounter, as the GM prefers.



Allow the players to each make a Spot check (DC 27). Those who succeed may act in the upcoming surprise round; the others are caught unprepared by Hielaa's *call lightning*.

The last of Leral's sentence is drowned out in a sudden, near-deafening clap of thunder as massive bolt of lightning slams down amidst the party, causing 9d10 points of electricity damage to everyone within 10 feet (Reflex half, DC 16). If the party is spread out, the bolt strikes where it can catch the most characters.

With a screaming cackle, accompanied by additional blasts of thunder, the storm hag Hielaa swoops from the clouds. Several manta-like creatures are soaring through the air beside her, visible only because they crackle and pulse with a cobalt-blue charge.

Hielaa has harried and harassed the heroes for quite some time — since the very beginning of this saga, if the players have experienced the entire Serpent Amphora Cycle. This is the last time they will have to deal with her — one way or another.

Hielaa and her kites fight to the death. Until and unless she runs out of offensive spells, the hag prefers to fight from high in the air, well beyond the reach of melee weapons. (Remember to apply whatever ranged attack penalties, etc., are appropriate based on the current strength of any winds she might summon.) She focuses most of her attacks on enemy spellcasters, hoping to eliminate their ability to strike back at her.

Racing the Dragon

Assuming the PCs have survived the final assault by Hielaa, they part ways with Leral and may trek back across the Haggard Hills toward the Ganjus. The journey is not an easy one but it is uneventful, for the most part. The small animals and hunting raptors they saw on their first trip through the hills are gone, and even the droning of insects is conspicuously absent. Monsters and predators, rare in this land to begin with, seem to have gone to ground as well, and the party runs no risk of random encounters. It's almost as if the entire region is holding its breath.

Just as they finally near the Ganjus, the trees barely visible protruding above and between the hills that yet separate the heroes from their goal, allow each of the players a Spot check (DC 20). Those who succeed happen to glance behind them at the right time, and see a dark speck on the horizon. Though much too far away to make out details, it's clear that the thing is flying... and must be very, very large.

If no one notices this pursuer immediately, allow another Spot check every 10 minutes (reduce the DC by 2, cumulatively, each time). Bear in mind that longer the heroes take to spot the beast, the less time they'll have to get away from it.

The creature chasing them is the woodwreck dragon Sath-Theransus. The greatest of the monsters to serve the Dar al Annot in the immediate area, it stole the Amphora once before — and this time, it

Hielaa the Storm Hag and Three Thunder Kites

Note: Be sure to include Leral and Duzghul for XP awards when dividing XP after this battle (if they were present), as the sentinel and her beast fight alongside the heroes because of her grudge against Hielaa.

Encounter Level: 12

Hielaa, storm hag (formerly half-orc) Drd9: CR 12; SZ Large monstrous humanoid; HD 9d8+45; hp 117; Init +6 (Dex); Spd 40 ft., fly 80 ft. (good); AC 21 (+6 Dex, +5 natural); Atk bite +10 melee (1d6+5), 2 claws +5 melee (1d6+2), hair +6 melee (special, hair); Reach 10 ft. (20 ft. for hair); SA improved grab, constrict 1d6+5, *Speak with animals*, spells; SQ damage reduction 5/+1, electricity resistance 20, nature sense, woodland stride, trackless step, resist nature's lure, *wild shape* (3/day; Small to Large), venom immunity; AL CE; SV Fort +11, Ref +9, Will +12; Str 20, Dex 22, Con 20, Int 12, Wis 22, Cha 12.

Skills: Animal Empathy +4, Concentration +13, Handle Animal +3, Intuit Direction +11, Knowledge (nature) +11, Ritual Casting* +10, Scry +4, Spellcraft +12, Wilderness Lore +15.

Feats: Blind-Fight, Brew Potion, Combat Casting, Flyby Attack, Heighten Spell, Quicken Spell, Spell Penetration, Weapon Finesse (hair).

Special Attacks: *Improved grab* (Ex): To use this ability, Hielaa must hit an opponent of up to Medium-size with a hair attack. If she hits, she can constrict; *Constrict* (Ex): Hielaa deals 1d6+5 points of damage with a successful grapple check; *Speak with animals* (Sp): Hags may speak with animals at will, as the spell, but only with those animals normally found in the hag's normal habitat.

Druid spells prepared (6/6/6/4/3/2): 0 — *adhere to wood**, *chill/warmth**, *detect magic*, *flare*, *light*, *resistance*; 1st — *cure light wounds* (x2), *endure elements*, *entangle*, *magic fang* (x2); 2nd — *charm person or animal*, *frog tongue**, *heat metal*, *hold animal*, *soften earth and stone*, *Speak with animals*; 3rd — *call lightning* (already cast), *contagion*, *Ganest's farstrike**, *poison*;

4th — *dispel magic*, *rusting grasp*, *sleet storm*; 5th — *control winds*, *ice storm*.

Possessions: 4 javelins of lightning, oil of bane of the forge** (3 doses), 3 potions of enhanced senses**, 3 potions of cure moderate wounds, wand of downdraft** (50 chg),

Source: Creature Collection.

* From Relics & Rituals.

** From Relics & Rituals 2: Lost Lore.

Hielaa has already cast *call lightning* (the bolt that struck the party just before her attack). She cannot call another bolt for 10 minutes.

Thunder Kites (3): CR 3; SZ Small elemental (air); HD 2d8+2; hp 16, 13, 9; Init +5 (+1 Dex, +4 Improved Initiative); Spd fly 90 ft. (perfect); AC 12 (+1 size, +1 Dex); Atk slam +2 melee (1d4); SA electrical discharge; SQ elemental, immunities, partial invisibility, electrical absorption, darkvision 60 ft.; AL N; SV Fort +1, Ref +4, Will -2; Str 10, Dex 13, Con 12, Int 2, Wis 6, Cha 4.

Skills: Listen +3, Sense Motive +4.

Feats: Improved Initiative, Flyby Attack.

Special Attacks: *Electrical discharge* (Ex): Discharges 1d4 lightning arcs when within 5 ft. of a suitable conductor (including characters), dealing 1d12 points of electricity damage (Reflex half, DC 13) per arc. The kite may discharge 4 such arcs before its charge is spent, and the kite must absorb more power from the surrounding storm or another source.

Special Qualities: *Elemental:* Immune to poison, sleep, paralysis and stunning. Not susceptible to critical hits or flanking; *Immunities* (Ex): Immune to all electricity and sonic attacks; *Partial invisibility* (Ex): Glow iridescent blue when charged, but are naturally invisible otherwise; *Electrical absorption* (Ex): Absorb up to 10 points of electricity damage per round within a 10-foot radius, whether or not it is targeted at them.

Source: Creature Collection 2: Dark Menagerie, p 192. Where statistics between this sidebar and Creature Collection 2 differ, this sidebar's information takes precedence

intends to ensure that the heroes do not survive to come after it again.

Anyone with the slightest degree of any appropriate Knowledge skill (arcana, nature, history, local: Hornsaw, or anything else the GM feels is applicable) knows full well that they stand next to no chance in a direct encounter with a woodwack. They could try to hide, but the woodwack's senses are acute, and for all their uneven contours, the Haggard Hills don't provide much functional cover from an airborne attacker.

Is the party doomed, then? No, one viable option remains. The dragon is closing the distance between them fast, but the Ganjus — and the Jordeh druids —

wait over a few more hills. The heroes cannot fight, and they cannot hide. But they can certainly run.

Running the Race

As stated above, a fight between the dragon and the party is a nearly hopeless proposition, and while **The Serpent Citadel** is meant to be challenging, it's also intended to be fair. Thus, unless the players do something monumentally unwise, the GM shouldn't allow the dragon to catch them before they reach the Ganjus. The players, however, don't have to know that.

Play this scene for excitement: squeeze all the tension from it that you can. Describe, in exquisite

Troubleshooting the Dragon

In a situation as fluid as this one, any number of things can go wrong — many of which stem from the fact that players rarely behave entirely as the GM anticipates. Below are some possible complications, and suggestions for dealing with them.

The heroes decide to stand and face the dragon.

Although unlikely, it's possible that the players may decide to take on the woodwrack, rather than run from it. This may stem from a lack of character knowledge of woodwrack dragons, or it may simply come from the (false) assumption that this adventure wouldn't include a monster that the PCs can't defeat.

The GM can, of course, drop broader hints. Perhaps one of the characters remembers some stories she's heard about woodwrack dragons, even if she lacks the proper Knowledge skills. Maybe the party sees some other creature attack the dragon *en route* — a creature they recognize as exceptionally tough — and watches as the dragon tears it apart with little to no effort.

If, after all this, the players *still* insist on fighting, the GM would be well within his rights to let the dice fall where they may. However, since that would likely result in the end of the campaign, or at least of this party, he may allow

a bit of *deus ex machina* and have the Jordeh come to the party's aid, even if the PCs are still well out in the Haggard Hills. If so, the GM should only do so after the dragon's had at least a few rounds to maul the party. Many players do not appreciate having their characters rescued by NPCs, so this tactic should be considered only as a very last resort.

One or more characters decide to delay the dragon while the rest make their escape.

This actually isn't a "problem" at all. The Scarred Lands are in desperate need of heroes. If a player decides to sacrifice her character for the good of the mission, let her. Allow her to succeed in delaying the dragon long enough for the party to reach the woods. The party would probably have made it to the Ganjus anyway, but do not to cheapen the sacrifice by pointing that out. (Alternately, the Jordeh might honor the PC's self-sacrifice by offering to cast a *reincarnate* spell if the characters can retrieve the body.)

The dragon is already dead.

It's just conceivable, although *highly* unlikely, that the party managed to slay the dragon in Chapter One. In this case, don't cheapen their victory by throwing a second woodwrack dragon at them. Instead, replace it with another encounter at least similarly difficult. (A moon hag might be appropriate.)

detail, the scree-covered slopes of the hill on which the horses' hooves slip, costing precious seconds; the steep rock face that forces the heroes to turn back and go around another way; the dead silence of the animals who have long since gone to ground in fear of the terror that draws ever nearer. Ask precisely how the heroes are staging their escape. Call for Ride checks, Climb checks, Constitution checks for characters and horses — anything and everything that seems appropriate to the circumstances. With each failed check, the dragon draws noticeably nearer. With each success, it seems the heroes are still just barely gaining ground, as though the forest were slowly moving away from them, the branches of the trees waving mockingly.

If you really want to put the fear into the players, let the dragon catch up with them just as they reach the Ganjus. Run through a single round of combat or even two, if the PCs might be able to take it — enough to maim without causing any character deaths.

And then, as all seems lost, the Ganjus erupts with swarms of biting and stinging birds and animals! Elementals of all sorts converge on the dragon, fire rains from the heavens! The Jordeh druids, whom

Tamlaine promised would be waiting for the heroes, have taken a hand. Though furious, the dragon is wise enough not to face the might of the assembled Jordeh in their own territory. Thrashing about with the pain of the wounds it has already received, it turns tail back across the Haggard Hills, making for home.

If the GM feels that no combat is necessary, the PCs simply reach the forest and encounter the druids waiting within. Several of them remain behind to drive off the woodwrack, while the others lead the heroes onward.

Meeting the Jordeh

Once the heroes are (relatively) safe within the southernmost reaches of the Ganjus, they have a few moments to converse with the waiting druids. Soon, 13 elves — some garbed in robes, others in simple jerkins and leggings, still others in leather or hide armor — gather around the party. Some are male, some female, and all bear sprigs of holly and mistletoe on their persons. Their expressions are uniformly grim.

From their midst, a single elf steps forward. He is shorter than his companions — hardly taller than a halfling — yet he carries himself with a regal, almost arrogant bearing. He is bald, save for a jet-black queue on the back of his head, and his skin is rough and dark. He wears armor that appears to be made from portions of bear hide, and he carries a scimitar that would serve as little more than an oversized dagger in the hands of a human.

“As Tamllaine promised, we have awaited your coming,” the elf says. “I will not wish you good day, travelers, for I know already that your day has been difficult, but I greet you in the name of the Jordeh and the elves of Vera-Tre. I am called Enascine.”

Enascine (*male elf, Drd8/Jor7, CN*; wears a *ring of mind shielding*) and his companions (*male and female elves, Drd6, NG or N*) are happy to bestow a few lesser curative spells on the heroes if they're injured. The elves don't have much in the way of powerful healing magics prepared, however.

If asked about Tamllaine, the elf says, “Her injuries were quite severe. But with the aid of our brethren, she recovers. She sends her apologies that she is yet not well enough to meet you herself.”

Once the party is ready to move on, the druids guide them northward. “We will take you deep into the Ganjus,” Enascine explains, “where the place of power may be found. Only there can that...” He casts a glance at whichever character carries the Amphora, and shudders. “...that *thing* be destroyed.

“I must ask,” he continues, “that you allow us to study the *Song of Unmaking* as we travel. We must be as familiar with the ritual as possible if we are to succeed. Truthfully, I wish we had longer, but a week or thereabouts — the time required to reach our destination — will have to suffice.”

And so, the party must once more endure a lengthy hike through the forest. Still, the lush beauty of the Ganjus is a welcome change from the twisted boles of the sickened Hornsaw.

Enascine is reticent, speaking only to answer questions, and rather abruptly at that. His primary interest seems to be in studying the *Song of Unmaking* and discussing its particulars with his companions. (This is a subterfuge. He, and the others described in “Bloodshed in the Grove,” are already familiar with the ritual, thanks to the efforts of the agents they and the other Bringers of Autumn have slipped into the ranks of the Vigils.) He does reveal that the *Song of Unmaking* is too powerful for most of his companions, although he himself can participate. They will summon others to aid them once they reach the sacred grove.

Unlike during their previous trip through the Ganjus, the party's guides seem unable to avoid the forest's random creatures. In fact, the woods seem

Troubleshooting the Druids

As usual, the players have several opportunities to throw the GM for a loop here. Below are some suggestions for keeping things on track.

The PCs are too suspicious to accompany the druids, or to turn over the ritual.

In either case, Enascine shakes his head and looks annoyed. “We've no time for this nonsense,” he insists. “You wish the Amphora destroyed, yes? We are the only ones who can do it. You will follow us, and you will let us learn the ritual, else your mission fails.”

He does agree, reluctantly, to wait long enough for the heroes to create a duplicate of the ritual (requiring roughly an hour) if they don't wish to give up their only copy. Other than that, however, he refuses to cooperate with the party or to take them anywhere until they accede to his wishes.

A spellcasting hero attempts to *detect evil* or make use of other divination spells.

Any such attempts prove useless. A *ring of mind shielding* protects Enascine, and the druids accompanying him are ignorant of his planned treachery.

The heroes attack the druids for some reason.

The druids defend themselves long enough to escape, leaving the party alone in the woods. Enascine and his allies (see “Bloodshed in the Grove”) return later and attempt to steal the Amphora. They'll only make the attempt when at full strength, which means they'll likely succeed (and slaughter most of the party in the process) — but who asked the PCs to attack the druids in the first place...?!

more dangerous than they were even when the PCs wandered in alone. The chance of a random encounter rises from 5% per hour to 8% (i.e., from 30% to 48% per 6 hours) for the duration of this trek.

If the characters happen to notice the increase of encounters and ask Enascine about it, the druid ponders the notion for a moment. “Perhaps the power of the Witch-Queen has stirred them up. We are near to destroying her greatest relic, after all.”

A Difficult Decision

After many days of travel, the druids lead the heroes to the front door of a small hut. It is built amongst a tightly packed cluster of trees; in fact,

several of the trunks are incorporated into the walls or serve as load-bearing columns for the structure's roof. The ground around it is littered with fallen leaves and sticks, and the hut has clearly not seen much use in quite some time.

"This is as far as we can take you," Enascine tells the heroes. "We must proceed alone from here with the Amphora. The presence of nonbelievers in the grove weakens its power, and would render the casting of the ritual ineffective. This hut was the home of one of our number, now returned to Denev's bosom. It's not much, but it should be comfortable. You may serve as guards, as this is the only easy route into the grove."

If the heroes agree to this arrangement, Enascine continues: "It's vital that you not allow *anyone* to pass. The Serpent Mother's servants are likely grown quite desperate, and they will almost certainly attempt to disrupt the ritual." Then, with a final parting wish for good fortune and Denev's blessing, they fade into the woods toward the north.

The players may be understandably reluctant to simply hand over the Serpent Amphora to someone they hardly know, regardless of the reasons. Enascine makes every attempt to convince them that staying behind is an absolute necessity. "We cannot succeed if you are present. You have come all this way to destroy that foul thing. Would you now turn back, your task incomplete? This is the only way."

Again, if the party eventually acquiesces, the druids take up the Amphora and disappear into the forest to the north.

If the heroes absolutely refuse to cooperate, however, Enascine's shoulders finally slump. "I am sorry you distrust me so. You may accompany us — and let any failure of the ritual, and the repercussions of that failure, rest on your heads alone."

If the party agrees to wait at the hut, proceed to "A Place of Waiting." If it accompanies Enascine and the other Jordeh, continue with "Treachery and Betrayal."

A Place of Waiting

The heroes remain in or around the hut for several hours. It's a comfortable place, if a bit run down, consisting of a large central room — something of a living room or a den with a large woodstove — and two smaller chambers: a bedroom and, surprisingly enough, an indoor bath. The heroes must provide their own heat and water if they wish to take advantage of the cramped copper tub, and they must provide their own food if they wish to prepare anything on the woodstove.

Just as evening falls, several of the elven Jordeh stagger out of the woods toward the hut. They are badly burned, their flesh blackened, clothes charred.

Sneaking About

The PCs may pretend to let the Jordeh take the Amphora, but follow in secret, either sending a single stealthy individual or proceeding in a group.

If the entire party follows the druids, they are present to witness the events of "Treachery and Betrayal," as described therein. Otherwise, those individuals who shadowed Enascine witness these events, and may then escort the remaining Jordeh back to the other heroes.

One of them, an elf-maid who was beautiful before something cooked her flesh and burned away her hair, collapses against the first PC she encounters.

"We were betrayed!" she rasps, her voice made hoarse by her injuries. "Enascine has been corrupted. He told us all to gather in one spot and pray to Denev while he cast a spell to summon our brethren, but he lied. He called fire down upon us!"

"As those of us who survived attempted to recover, he took the Amphora and merged with the great oak in the center of the grove to which he had led us. We know not where he has gone, nor why he turned on us, but we know he must be found!"

Assuming the party expresses at least some interest in tracking down Enascine and recovering the Amphora — not to mention venting their righteous anger upon him with various martial instruments — one of the other elves speaks. "We did not wish to disturb Tamline while she heals," he says, "but we have no choice now. We know *she* can be trusted, and she will know how to contact the greatest of our order. Surely they can determine where the traitor has gone."

Once the party agrees, proceed to "Conflicting Accounts," below.

Treachery and Betrayal

Enascine leads the rest of the Jordeh and the party north from the hut. His path appears almost random; if he follows a trail, it's one only he can see. Finally, an hour or so before sunset, the travelers enter an open grove, perhaps 30 feet across. It's roughly circular, with small rough stones haphazardly placed around the perimeter. A single great oak stands near the center, its branches stretching out as though to encompass everyone within its grasp.

"I have been here," a blonde elven maiden clad in a green robe exclaims. "I had no idea this grove was a holy place."

"We do not reveal it to be so, even to many of our own brethren," Enascine responds. "Forgive me if it seems deceptive,



but the power of this place could easily be misused. Only those of us who have learned the higher mysteries are ever made aware of it.” He turns slowly to face the heroes.

“Would you be so kind as to place the Amphora there?” he asks, pointing to a fork in the tree at about eye level. “I must rest and prepare myself until the others arrive, and the power of the grove must have a few moments to adapt to the Serpent Mother’s energies if this is to be effective.”

He frowns. “I truly hope your presence here will not interfere. The oak is the source of the grove’s power. May I at least ask you not to touch it, once you’ve placed the Amphora? With luck, that will be sufficient to prevent you from tainting the ritual.”

Once the Amphora is in place—and Enascine absolutely refuses to continue until it is—he directs the other Jordeh to gather together in a group on the far side of the clearing, asking that they pray for Denev’s favor in the coming ordeal, and keep a watch for his allies. He then returns to the oak and kneels before it, one hand on the Amphora, and takes out a sprig of holly, praying almost silently, his lips barely moving. (He is actually casting a spell with only *verbal* and *divine focus* components, so only a character within 10 feet of him—who can thus hear his whispering—can attempt a Spellcraft check [DC 20] to identify the spell he is casting.)

If the heroes leave him alone, Enascine completes the spell he was secretly casting: a *flame strike* prepared with Still Spell. The divine fire roars down in the midst of the druids, killing several and injuring the rest. If any PCs are within the 10-foot radius of the strike, they too suffer 15d6 points of damage (Reflex save, DC 19, for half damage). Enascine then stands and, grabbing the Amphora, steps through the oak using *tree stride* (which he had cast hours ago).

If for some reason the party is too close for him to cast *flame strike* and remain undetected, or if he feels they’re near enough to stop him, he forgoes this attack and proceeds straight to his escape.

In either case, the surviving druids are stunned. They are quick to assure the heroes that they had no part in Enascine’s treachery, even disarming themselves as evidence of their good intentions.

“We have no way of knowing where he might have gone,” an elf-maid—no longer blonde or beautiful if she has suffered the ravages of the fire—explains. “But others may.”

“We did not wish to disturb Tamline while she heals,” she says, “but we’ve no choice now. We know she can be trusted, and she will know how to contact the greatest of our order. Surely they can determine where the traitor has gone.”

Once the party agrees, proceed to “Conflicting Accounts.”

Conflicting Accounts

The druid takes a moment to thank the heroes profusely for their efforts to date. “Even if we fail in retrieving the Amphora from the traitor Enascine, you have performed your duties well. The children of Denev, and of the many gods, are all in your debt.”

She and the other surviving druids gather, and several of them, oddly enough, extract handfuls of seeds from their pouches and pockets. They pray aloud for a moment; a Spellcraft check (DC 17) identifies the spell as *animal messenger*. After a moment, a small flock of birds descends into the clearing, landing upon outstretched arms and pecking hungrily at the seeds.

One of the Jordeh removes a bit of parchment from a pouch that fortunately escaped the *flame strike*, and tears it into a handful of strips. The other druids scribe a brief message on each of the scraps, and then tie them to the legs of the birds. A shake of the wrist, a whisper of prayer, and the birds are aloft once more, flying east.

"Now," one of the druids says, "we can but wait."

The wait is not a long one. After an hour or so, the sun is setting when one of the nearby trees seems almost to shimmer briefly. Tamllaine (*female elf, Dnd6/Jor4, N*) steps forth as though the bark were nothing more substantial than a wisp of fog. She shows no signs of the injuries inflicted upon her by the woodwrack dragon.

"Why did you not summon me when you went to meet our guests?" she asks the gathered druids angrily, gesturing at the heroes. "I might have prevented this!"

"Enascine told us you were still recovering, Tamllaine," one of the Jordeh protests. "We thought you yet injured and too weak to travel."

"Another of his lies. I have been fine for days now." Tamllaine spits into the soil. "I cannot believe Enascine, of all, would betray us like this."

She turns then to the PCs. "I have already sent messages to others of my brethren. They will join us here briefly. Before they arrive, however, I feel you are due some explanations."

Keeping It All Straight

This particular summary is as much for the sake of the GM as it is for the players. The Serpent Amphora Cycle involves more than a few factions, each with their own objectives, and it can be difficult to remember who's who.

Tamllaine can relay the following information however the GM prefers. The GM might even decide to keep some of it secret as a basis for future adventures, although we recommend she not hold back too much. The players may be feeling a bit frustrated at having lost the Amphora yet again, so it might be wise simply to give them all the answers at this point.

The various factions involved in this story, and their motivations, are as follows:

The Vigils of Vesh

The players should know how and why the Vigils are involved: simply put, they managed to recover the Amphora and they seek to destroy it.

The Dar al Annot

One of the primary factions to have opposed the PCs at this point, the Dar al Annot is an order that worships

Mormo and seeks to gather all the artifacts of the Serpent Mother from across the Scarred Lands. Led by the Blood Crone, this group possessed the Amphora before it was stolen and eventually found its way to the Vigils. The storm hags, the woodwrack dragon, the force that attacked the heroes in Marilvaz's tomb in **The Serpent & the Scepter**—these were all agents of the Dar al Annot. They have no interest in *using* the Amphora for now; they just want to have it.

The Cannibals of Khet

Another druidic order that primarily worships Mormo, the Cannibals are bitter rivals of the Dar al Annot. They are not actually a single faction, but are made up of various smaller sects. The largest, ruled by the archdruid Sharliss Serpent-kiss, possesses a ritual that, when cast upon the Amphora in the presence of another titan, is supposed to allow the Witch-Queen to usurp the other's form. However, this faction of the Cannibals has not been involved in the heroes' adventures. Instead, they have chosen to stay out of it for reasons unknown. The PCs have been dealing with a smaller but far more secretive faction of the Cannibals of Khet called...

The Bringers of Autumn

This sect of the Cannibals is ruled by the enigmatic Illkuthsra, called the Autumn King. Nobody knows precisely what he is. He appears to be some form of undead, not unlike a lich, but may in fact be an ages-old creature of the fey. None outside his order can fathom his motives or his goals. At times he grants his full cooperation to other Cannibals, while at others he seems bent on his own objectives, even if they put him at odds with his brethren. It is rumored that he may have possessed the Amphora even before the Dar al Annot.

Tamllaine describes the vinedead, Illkuthsra's hideous constructs that appear as vine-wrapped skeletons. The PCs, if they have experienced the events of **Serpent in the Fold** and/or **The Serpent & the Scepter**, may well recognize the description, and realize that the Bringers of Autumn have been involved in their quest far more deeply than it appeared.

The Jordeh

The Jordeh are an order of Denev-worshipping druids who make their home in the Ganjus woods. They are elves from Vera-tre, with some few half-elves among them, or, more rarely, elves from other lands. The true Jordeh seek only to protect the Ganjus and its holy places, and to destroy the taint of Mormo and the other titans when it threatens the region.

In a sad tone, Tamllaine reveals that the Bringers of Autumn have corrupted a small number of the Jordeh druids to their way of thinking. The true Jordeh have made frequent efforts to purge their ranks of these heathens, but have never proved able to do so completely.

"Enascine," she says, "must be one of these traitors, these Jordeh-seh. That means the Amphora may already

be in the hands of the Autumn King, and none can say what he might do with it.”

Tamlaine has no way of knowing that the Bringers of Autumn have also infiltrated the Vigils, but if the GM wants to let the players in on that fact here, he can find some reason for Tamlaine to have recently acquired that information.

A Panicked Warning

As Tamlaine runs through her explanations, the grove (or the area around the hut, depending on where these events took place) fills with druids. Some step through the trees, as Tamlaine herself did; others fly or leap from the trees in animal form and abruptly resume their normal shapes; and still others simply step into the clearing, arriving as normal travelers. At a quick estimate, including the druids who had accompanied Enascine earlier, somewhere between two and three *dozen* druids are now present.

A grizzled, thick-bearded old man, clad in leather armor and a heavy cloak the color of gold autumn leaves, steps forward to Tamlaine and the heroes. So wild is his beard and so thick his shoulders, it takes a moment to recognize that he is not human but half-elven. “We came as swiftly as we could, sister. And I fear that we *can* tell you where the traitor has gone.

“The trees of the forest scream in pain, writhe with the obscenities occurring at their heart.” The old druid’s eyes are wide, and his voice quivers with horror, fear, and outrage. “Enascine has gone to the Grove of the Mother, Tamlaine! He has gone to the Grove, and even Denev knows not what he may do there!”

The Grove of the Mother

Her face pale, Tamlaine faces the PCs. “My friends,” she says, her voice nearly cracking, “we need your aid now more than ever. But I must ask that you take an oath, here and now, in the names of the Earth Mother and the gods themselves — whomever you hold most dear — that you will keep secret what you are about to learn. Not even to your allies amongst the Vigils can you reveal it!”

She and the other druids make it very clear that they will not proceed without such an oath. If the party refuses, the Jordeh go without them to attempt to stop the machinations of the Bringers of Autumn — and the druids will fail, allowing nothing less than the rebirth of Mormo herself into the Scarred Lands. The players don’t know this, but it should be pretty clear that a great deal rests on their characters’ actions at this point.

Once the oaths have been taken, Tamlaine continues. “Some of you may have heard legends that the resting place of Mother Denev herself lies in the Ganjus. These legends are true. The Grove of the Mother is the very spot where she returned, exhausted, to the earth in the aftermath of the Titan War. If the Cannibals destroy the Amphora there, if they release Mormo’s corruption into the soil where Denev slumbers, I cannot even imagine

what the repercussions may be. They may accomplish nothing at all — or they may poison the very essence of the Mother herself!

“Will you come with us? Will you lend your efforts one last time to our cause?”

Assuming the heroes acquiesce, it requires several hours for the party and the dozens of druids accompanying them to reach their destination. The hike through the Ganjus seems unusual to any of the PCs who are paying attention to the surroundings. No path is visible. Animals dash to and fro wildly, as though frightened yet unsure which way to run. The directions of the Jordeh seem almost wrong; the heroes’ instincts scream at them to turn left where the druids go right, to turn back where the elves go forward.

Should any of them ask, the nearest druid explains, “The Ganjus itself protects the Grove of the Mother, inciting an urge in all strangers to travel some other way. If you did not have us to show you the path, you would have gone astray without ever realizing you had done so. This also prevents us from transporting there magically.”

Finally, around midnight, the trees clear, as though the forest itself has come to an end. The heroes and their guides stand before a sight magnificent enough to stop the heart — were it not in the throes of unimaginable horror.

The Grove of the Mother is a vast expanse of flawless greenery, surrounded by the most ancient of boles, shaded by leaves that remain thick and green. The entire area is illuminated by a series of *continual flame* spells that flicker from many of the surrounding trees. The grass is almost unnaturally lush, the soil soft beneath the heroes’ feet. A stream cuts across the turf, feeding a small pool of water in the grove’s center, over 300 feet from the PCs. The pool itself is surrounded by rock, perhaps resting in the very top of a vast boulder often found in forests that border mountainous regions.

But the thick grass has been tramped down by the press of many feet, and the pool and the stream are tainted with the flow of blood. The corpses of several elven druids — loyal Jordeh who gave their life to defend the Grove — lie scattered about.

Thirteen men and women surround the pool, garbed in ceremonial robes of deepest crimson and darkest green, the hue of blood and serpent scales. Their voices rise and fall in a chant hypnotic in its rhythms. Two other figures, robed and heavily hooded, lurk some ways back from the chanting druids, as though standing sentry.

Enascine himself stands at the edge of the pool, a bloody dagger clenched in his fist. Kneeling before him, her throat already opened and her life spilling forth, a brown-skinned medusa thrashes in her death throes. She is safe — if unpleasant — to look upon, for her eye sockets gape open and empty, leaking a viscous mixture of blood and other less identifiable fluids. Nothing prevents her from collapsing face down in the pool — where two of her kind have already preceded her — save Enascine’s iron grip on her snake-hair.

Scattered around the druids are yet more bodies of loyal Jordeh — several of whom are tightly bound and gagged, and thus presumably still alive.

“Look!” Tamlane hisses, pointing. At the edge of the pool, where the bloodied waters lap against its side, sits the Amphora. The magics of the ritual are almost complete. Even as the PCs watch, the blood of the third medusa spills across its base. With a sound like a tree splitting beneath the woodsman’s axe, the Amphora gives a great toll, as of a bell under great strain.

“We must attack now!” Tamlane says. “The ritual is but moments away from completion. It requires 11 of them to complete it, so we need only slay three. If they—”

And then the medusa’s blood makes its way into the first of the minute cracks in the Amphora—and all around the heroes, the world shrieks its agony.

In the center of the grove beside the pool, the earth itself buckles outward, as though something beneath the soil itself seeks freedom. An enormous rock, nearly a boulder, breaches the surface. It spreads itself suddenly, forming into fingers and thumb; it is, surely, the hand of Denev herself! From the hole thus formed, a pained keening arises, and all the world’s pain is in that scream.

Around the PCs, every one of the pure Jordeh druids falls to the earth, bodies writhing and thrashing. Many begin to choke as they vomit putrid and clotted gouts of blood; flesh bulges, and hideous serpentine shapes move beneath their skin. From the earth beside the Amphora, snakes rise from the gore-soaked earth and slither toward the gaping pit from which Denev’s hand emerges. Some wrap themselves about those stony fingers, burrowing deep into the titan’s very flesh. Gradually at first but with

increasing speed, the stony skin covering the fist turns to mottled green scales. The air grows hot and heavy, and the stench of diseased meat permeates the grove.

Then, their allies stripped from them, each of the heroes hears a voice in the back of his mind, speaking in his or her native tongue. It is a deep voice, yet feminine, quivering in agony. It is the voice of a titan, and the power — as well as the pain — in the two words it utters is impossible to ignore:

“Help me!”

Bloodshed in the Grove

Unless they decide to run screaming — which may seem like a good idea under the circumstances, but which has understandably catastrophic results — the heroes have few options but to try to disrupt the ritual before it is complete. They don’t have long to do it, either.

From the moment of Denev’s cry, the ritual is a mere 17 rounds from completion. At a standard human running speed, it requires 3 rounds to cross the distance between the party and the center of the grove, where the corrupted Jordeh are conducting the ritual.

If the heroes charge the druids, the two hooded figures — both medusas loyal to the Bringers of Autumn — intercept them about halfway. If the heroes stand back and launch spells or missile attacks, the medusas charge the heroes instead. In either case, the medusas do their utmost to kill or petrify the attackers, and are willing to fight to the death.

Should the players seek to wipe out the druids with an area affect spell such as *fireball*, remind them that doing so will kill the bound Jordeh as well. (Under the circum-



The Opposition

Encounter Level: 11

Although the corrupted Jordeh are effectively 11th-level druids with powerful allies, neither they nor the medusas are presently at full strength, nor do they possess the magic items normally found on characters of their level or have animal companions. (Their CRs have been reduced accordingly.)

The druids do not currently possess their full complement of spells, since they had to prepare the *Song of Unmaking* and they have already used several spells each in killing the loyal Jordeh who guarded the Grove. This also explains why the druids' hit points are slightly lower than average. Furthermore, their tactical options are limited by the fact that they must remain between the heroes and the other druids.

Because the other monsters are the results of summoning spells, they do not add to the EL of the encounter.

Vipers, Stones, and Dire Boars

Medusas (2): CR 7; SZ Medium-size monstrous humanoid; HD 6d8+6; hp 37, 32; Init +2 (Dex); Spd 30 ft.; AC 15 (+2 Dex, +3 natural); Atk +8/+3 melee (1d6, crit 19–20 (x2), short sword) and snakes +3 melee (1d4 plus poison); SA petrifying gaze, poison; ALLE; SV Fort +3, Ref +7, Will +6; Str 10, Dex 15, Con 12, Int 12, Wis 13, Cha 15.

Skills: Bluff +11, Disguise +11, Move Silently +9, Spot +10.

Feats: Point Blank Shot, Weapon Finesse (short sword), Weapon Finesse (snakes).

Petrifying gaze (Su): Turn to stone permanently, 30 ft.; Fort (DC 15).

Poison (Ex): Snake bite, Fort (DC 14); initial 1d6 temp Str/secondary 2d6 temp Str.

Possessions: Short sword, hooded robe. Note that these medusas do not carry the shortbows common to their sisters.

Snake, Huge viper: CR 3; SZ Huge animal; HD 4d8+4; hp 22; Init +4 (Dex); Spd 20 ft., climb 20 ft., swim 20 ft.; AC 15 (–2 size, +4 Dex, +3 natural); Atk bite +5 melee (1d4 and poison); Face 15 ft. by 15 ft. (coiled); Reach 10 ft.; SA poison; SQ scent; AL N; SV Fort +5, Ref +8, Will +2; Str 10, Dex 19, Con 13, Int 1, Wis 12, Cha 2.

Skills: Balance +12, Climb +12, Hide +3, Listen +9, Spot +9.

Feats: Weapon Finesse (bite).

Poison (Ex): Bite, Fort (DC 13); initial and secondary 1d6 temp Con.

Earth elemental: CR 3; SZ Medium-size elemental (earth); HD 4d8+12; hp 30; Init –1 (Dex); Spd 20 ft.; AC 18 (–1 Dex, +9 natural); Atk slam +8 melee (1d8+7); SA earth mastery, push; SQ elemental; AL N; SV Fort +7, Ref 0, Will +1; Str 21, Dex 8, Con 17, Int 4, Wis 11, Cha 11.

Skills: Listen +7, Spot +7.

Feats: Power Attack.

Special Attacks: *Earth mastery (Ex):* Gains +1 attack and damage bonus if both it and its opponent touch the ground, but –4 if opponent is airborne or waterborne; *Push (Ex):* May start a bull rush without provoking attack of opportunity.

Dire boar: CR 4; SZ Large animal; HD 7d8+21; hp 52; Init +0; Spd 40 ft.; AC 15 (–1 size, +6 natural); Atk bite +12 melee (1d8+12); Face 5 ft. by 10 ft.; SA ferocity; SQ scent; AL N; SV Fort +8, Ref +5, Will +6; Str 27, Dex 10, Con 17, Int 2, Wis 13, Cha 8.

Skills: Listen +9, Spot +8.

Ferocity (Ex): May fight without penalty even while disabled or dying.

Druids

Corrupted Jordeh (2), male or female wood elf Drd8/Jor3: CR 8 (see above); SZ Medium-size humanoid; HD 8d8 (Drd) plus 3d8 (Jor); hp 41, 36; Init +3 (Dex); Spd 20 ft. in armor, 30 ft. base; AC 19 (+3 Dex, +1 natural, +3 armor, +2 shield); Atk +8/+3 (1d6, *jordeh'lann*), or +11/+6 (1d8, crit x3, 110 ft., composite longbow); SA spells; SQ nature sense, animal companion, woodland stride, trackless step, resist nature's lure, wild shape (3/day; Small to Large), Child of the Oak, power of the Ganjus +1, whispers in the leaves, oaken resilience +1, tap the roots, wood elf traits; AL NE; SV Fort +9, Ref +6, Will +12; Str 10, Dex 16, Con 10, Int 13, Wis 17, Cha 10.

Skills: Animal Empathy +5, Concentration +11, Craft (tattoo) +3, Diplomacy +4, Heal +5, Hide +7, Knowledge (local: Ganjus) +5, Knowledge (nature) +10, Listen +15 [whispers in the leaves], Move Silently +8, Ritual Casting +8, Search +3, Spellcraft +5, Spot +5, Wilderness Lore +11.

Feats: Combat Casting, Dodge, Endurance, Track.

Languages: Common, Middle Elven, Druidic, Sylvan, Treant.

Druid spells prepared (6/6/5/5/3/2/1) [save DC 13 + spell level, or 14 + spell level within Ganjus]: 0 — *adhere to wood**, *create water*, *detect magic*, *detect poison*, *mending*; 1st — *chameleon skin**, *cure light wounds*, *endure elements*, *shillelagh*; 2nd — *animal infusion**, *burst of energy***, *cold snap**, *heat metal*; 3rd — *cure moderate wounds*, *earth blast***, *earthen screen***, *poison*; 4th — *mind over matter**, *spike stones*; 5th — none; 6th — *Song of Unmaking†*.

Possessions: Hide armor, *jordeh'lann* (masterwork quarterstaff), composite longbow, quiver and 12 arrows.

* From *Relics & Rituals*.

** From *Relics & Rituals 2: Lost Lore*.

† See the Appendix

stances, even this may seem like an acceptable loss, depending on the party's general alignment.)

The moment the Bringers of Autumn detect the incoming heroes — presumably on the first round of the charge or missile attacks — one of them breaks off his or her chanting and casts *summon nature's ally V*. The following round, that druid returns to the ritual, and another druid proceeds to cast *summon nature's ally V*. This continues either until the heroes win past the medusas and the summoned creatures to attack the druids themselves, or until all 13 druids have cast the spell in turn. They summon Medium-size earth elementals, dire boars, or Huge vipers.

Once the heroes have defeated the medusas and the summoned creatures, or as soon as they are almost near enough to attack the druids directly, the first two druids who cast *summon nature's ally V* break off their chanting and move to attack. This is the last line of defense; because the ritual requires 11 participants, none of the other druids ceases casting even to defend themselves. Instead, they try to complete the ritual before the PCs can slay any more of them.

A druid who is attacked while casting the ritual must make a Concentration check (DC 16 + damage taken) to continue casting, as usual. Because Enascine stands in the center, the PCs must first get past the ring of druids surrounding him before they can come after him.

Aftermath

The instant the PCs manage to remove three druids from the ritual — either by slaying them, or by killing the two who attack them and simply forcing a third to fail a single Concentration check — everything changes.

A deafening, high-pitched screech — nearly sufficient to cause the heroes' ears to bleed — reverberates from the deep pit growing in the center of the grove. The blood of the medusas contaminating the stream and the pool erupts out of the water and flows back uphill toward the Amphora. The relic shudders as the surviving essence of Mormo seeks re-absorption.

The cracks in the artifact caused by the ritual appear to shrink, then widen, then shrink again. Then, with a sound akin to the tearing of flesh, the Amphora, weakened by the incomplete *Song of Urmaking*, crumbles under the backlash of titanic energies. In a matter of seconds, little remains of it but dust. The blood of Mormo pools, swirling as though caught in conflicting tides, and then sinks harmlessly into the soil.

The Jordeh cease their thrashing and vomiting and rise shakily to their feet, weak and sick but no longer tainted by Mormo's essence. In contrast, all of the Bringers of Autumn except Enascine, having born the brunt of the mystical surge, now collapse. It takes them only moments to die, and nothing in the PCs' power can stop it (assuming they'd want to for some reason). Enascine himself remains, staring wide-eyed around the clearing at the results of his failure.

The titan's fist protruding from the earth flexes once, and the scales that had covered it shatter and fall to earth

where they swiftly decay. The stonelike skin of Denev is visible once more, and her hand submerges beneath the earth, once again tranquil. The gaping hole closes around it, the ground on either side melding together seamlessly.

A cool breeze with no apparent source washes over the heroes. Their pains and their worries are blown away, scattered like a morning mist. Even their wounds, no matter how severe, are fully healed. Those PCs who listen, truly listen, might just hear a sigh of relief and of heartfelt gratitude carried upon that cleansing wind.

But all is not quite over.

The ground begins to shake once more, although with less force, as though something heavy pounded on the earth. The leaves rustle, the branches bend back almost as though clearing a path. What appears to be an ambulatory tree — one easily 50 feet tall — steps into the clearing. It glances about with a face nearly hidden amongst knotholes and moss, and then glares directly at Enascine, who now cowers beside the pool.

"You don't understand!" The druid cries. His voice is breaking, and tears cut furrows into the dirt that now cakes his cheeks. "The natural order must be restored! The titans must rise, the gods fall! It's nature! You taught me that! *You!* This is for you, this is what *you* want!"

The leaves atop the treant rustle — the PCs get the distinct sensation that he would be shaking his head, had he one to shake. Slowly, in a rumbling, sonorous voice, echoing as though it had traveled up through a hollow in the earth, the treant says, "I must implore your forgiveness, noble strangers and Jordeh both. I knew when I took this one as my Oathling that he was excitable, even for one of flesh, but I knew not that it would come to this."

He pauses. "I have taught him poorly. His errors are my errors."

In another almost human gesture, the largest of the treant's branches bend downward, as though his shoulders slumped.

"And now I would beg of you," the noble being continues, with perhaps the faintest quaver in its rumbling voice, "leave me in privacy that I might correct that mistake."

Even if the PCs are reluctant to leave, the remaining Jordeh gently but firmly escort them away. Although the Amphora has been destroyed and Denev saved from Mormo's corruption, the druids' faces are downcast, their eyes mourning. Clearly they know what is about to occur.

And though the screams and begging of one lost druid echo through the Ganjus, only to fall suddenly silent — and though that silence is broken just as suddenly by the crackle of fire, followed by the gentle weeping of the trees as one of the oldest of their shepherds offers the ultimate penance for the transgressions of his apprentice — at least the heroes can take solace knowing that all the suffering and death that led to this moment was for a good cause.

It was all worth the Amphora's destruction.

Was it not?

Appendix

Thus, in the midst of both triumph and tragedy, does the tale of the Serpent Amphora come to its end.
...Almost.

Epilogue for the GM: The Seasons Turn

As always, the air smelled faintly of roses and the earthen floor of rich loam. The underground chamber was silent, save for the chittering of insects, the startled breathing of the sorceress Tirran Orroko, and the occasional dry rustling sound of bone on wood as her master shifted on his throne of thorns.

Two pairs of eyes, one living, one not, focused intently on the basin of clear water that servitor creatures had dragged into the room some time earlier. In that water, images moved, revealing the final culmination of months of planning and orchestration.

“Well.” The images faded, and Ilkuthsra, called the Autumn King, leaned back. The thorns and brambles of his throne passed harmlessly through cloth to bare bone. He ran one hand thoughtfully across the knot-work patterns carved into his bare skull. “That was... unexpected.” His voice, as always, was the sharp crack of splitting wood. But for the first time in Tirran’s long memory, it contained just the faintest hint of surprise.

“I don’t understand, my liege,” the sorceress admitted, turning away from the basin. “Was it not your intent for the Serpent Mother to possess the form of her traitorous sister?”

“Hardly, Tirran. The ritual to allow such transpossession is quite different than the one my servants performed for us. It never occurred to me that Mormo’s essence might be strong enough to make such an attempt when freed from the Amphora *without* the proper ritual.” The skeletal creature shook his head and chuckled. “Carelessness on my part, Tirran, I must admit. Still, the Veshan operatives did their jobs well, and prevented things from getting out of hand. I’m rather glad we didn’t kill them.”

The sorceress shook her head. “Excuse me if I seem a bit slow today, my lord...”

“I always do.” Another chuckle.

Tirran pursed her lips at her master’s humor, but continued gamely. “What did we really accomplish here? With the Amphora gone, she can never be raised! We’ve destroyed the Serpent Mother’s greatest artifact, and for what?”

“For what, Tirran? For knowledge. I now know that the Grove of the Mother is indeed the resting place of Denev. Granted, it is no great surprise, but confirmation is always useful.

“Remember, Mormo *can* be resurrected still. The power of a titan cannot simply disappear. I would think that you, who calls upon the magics of Mesos, would know that better than anyone. Her powers have simply been redistributed, scattered with the rest of her remains across the world.

“Most importantly, though, we know this: The titans, and one would almost have to assume the gods, are vulnerable. We knew a titan could harm a titan, a god a god, yes. But the essence of Mormo in the Amphora represented only a tiny portion of the Serpent Mother’s power, yet it was nearly enough to vanquish Denev when augmented by mortal magics. *Mortal* magics, Tirran! We now know how to harm — perhaps even to slay — an immortal.”

Tirran blinked, and slowly her face went pale. “And now that you know? How would you use such knowledge, Ilkuthsra?”

“Come, Tirran.” The Autumn King rose from his throne and stretched forth his bony fingers toward his servant. “Come with me, and I will show you.”

Further Stories

The Serpent Amphora Cycle may have ended, but that certainly doesn’t mean your campaign has to. A wily GM should have little difficulty extrapolating further adventures from the events that have come before.

The ranks of the Jordeh are sorely weakened by the Bringers of Autumn and through the treachery of some of their own. The order may not be strong enough to fulfill its duties. The Jordeh may prove unable to protect the Grove of the Mother and the Ganjus Forest from the machinations of various cults and titanspawn. The heroes have already proven their valor and their skill: the Jordeh might turn to them for yet more help. And the threats facing the Jordeh are many:

The PCs have dealt the Dar al Annot a mighty blow in their infiltration of Annot Kalambath, but Mormo’s druids are hardly down for the count. The Blood Crone and her servitors won’t take kindly to an invasion of their treasured sanctum, nor to the theft (again!) and subsequent destruction of the Amphora. They might choose to strike at the Jordeh, or even at the weakened Denev in her grove, before the Earth Mother’s druids return to full strength. Or, they might instead choose to target the PCs directly,

seeking vengeance against those who have caused them so much trouble. In either case, the heroes aren't in for an easy time.

What of the Cannibals of Khet? Sharliss Serpentkiss leads the largest faction of those druids and Mormo-worshippers, and she is ill-amused that the Amphora has been destroyed, that Mormo's potential resurrection was thwarted, and that her *own* ritual — the one actually *intended* to transfer Mormo's essence from the Amphora into Denev's grove — is now rendered useless. Some of that ire she might take out on Ilkuthsra and his Bringers of Autumn, and a civil war in Khirdet would certainly be cause for celebration in other lands. More likely, though, she (like the Daral Annot) will target the weakened Jordeh and possibly the heroes themselves.

As for Ilkuthsra, even if he's not fending off the ire of his brethren, he clearly has his own schemes — schemes in which the entire Serpent Amphora Cycle served as a mere opening gambit. Simple reconnaissance, as it were. The Autumn King's precise designs remain a mystery, at least for the nonce — but you, as GM, are certainly entitled, and even encouraged, to decide that for yourself. Your players will almost certainly be interested in finding out what the mysterious Autumn King's interest was in these events, in learning why he interfered as he did. Let them find their answers — or not — as you will.

Remember, as well, that not all the threats facing the Jordeh and the PCs need come from without. Surely not every one of the Bringers of Autumn who infiltrated the order was present at the Grove of the Mother. Only the gods know how many of Ilkuthsra's agents remain within the Jordeh's ranks; additional serpents in an all too vulnerable fold.

Finally, consider this: Annot Kalambath is said to be the central headquarters for the massive Daral Annot. The heroes cannot possibly have seen and explored the entire complex! Other chambers and entire levels most certainly exist, so well hidden that the PCs never found them, or perhaps accessible only through dark magics or foul rites. Whether the characters choose to return there — perhaps in the hope of dealing the Daral Annot a crippling blow — or whether they are drawn back in the course of yet another story, the Serpent Citadel can provide countless hours of fearsome, dungeon-crawl-style adventuring.

Mormo Rising

What if the unthinkable should occur? What if the PCs fail?

It's certainly not impossible. **The Serpent Citadel** in particular, and the entire Serpent Amphora Cycle in general, have numerous scenes where things can go horribly wrong. If the PCs should hesitate at the wrong time, if they should make a single faulty decision, or even if the dice simply turn against them at a crucial moment, they may prove unable to stop the essence of Mormo from thoroughly corrupting the Grove of the Mother.

Rewards

Any rewards or payment promised by Commander Durn and the Vigils will, of course, be forthcoming. Furthermore, the Jordeh will be extremely grateful to the heroes (assuming they succeeded in saving Denev, of course). They cannot offer material riches or magic items, but they will be more than happy to offer any reasonable services, spells, or training, and the PCs will be forever welcome in the Ganjus and among the druids.

In terms of experience, GMs should grant the players a story award for successfully completing the adventure. This award should range from 1,000 to 1,500 xp per PC, based upon the GM's assessment of each player's overall performance and on whether or not they picked up clues on their own, or if they had to depend on Intelligence checks and the like.

If this should happen, your instinctive reaction as GM — especially if their failure is due entirely to bad rolls, as opposed to bad decisions — might be to step in and save the day yourself, perhaps with another patrol of Jordeh or a team of Vigils showing up at the last possible moment to set things right.

That's a viable option, and certainly the easiest, but it may not be the most fun or the most interesting. Many players will feel, and rightly so, as though the spotlight has shifted off their characters. The players might prefer that the game end in their own failure than in someone else's victory.

If the heroes fail in their quest, why not allow Mormo to reenter the world? It's a hideous, terrifying concept, one that would utterly change the direction of any Scarred Lands campaign. So what?

It would also provide story fodder for dozens of games. Can the heroes find some way to destroy the newly reborn titan before she regains her full power? Can the PCs stand up to the power of Mormo's massed titanspawn, who must certainly rally around their mother? Can they convince all the warring nations that their ultimately petty squabbles and power plays must be put aside for the good of an entire world? For that matter, what of the gods themselves? They've had a century and a half to cement their rivalries and conflicts. Even with their previous experience with the titans, can *they* set aside those differences and work together against a threat such as this?

The challenge of a handful of heroes attempting to overcome such challenges offers countless hours of exciting roleplay.

The Song of Unmaking

Level: True Ritual — Drd 6, Wiz 7 (see below)

Components: V, S, M, XP

Casters Required: 11

Proxy: None

Casting Time: 5 hours

Range: Close (25 ft. + 5 ft./2 levels)

Effect: One artifact

Duration: Instantaneous

Saving Throw: None

Spell Resistance: No

Description

Unlike the other spells in his Tomb, Marilvaz did not create this ritual. Rather, he found it and copied it from an older work owned by a druid/sorceress named Zithinru. The ritual is supposedly the creation of the followers of the titan Mesos for use against the creations of the gods during the Divine War. The ritual was first penned at the end of the war, and has never, to anyone's knowledge, been used.

Spell Effect

This true ritual destroys any magic item it is cast upon, even those powerful artifacts normally immune to effects such as *dispelling* or *Morden's disjunction*. The relic cracks and shatters from

within, often breaking down into its component parts or substances. Under most conditions, the magic of the item disperses back into the world. The ritual's creators theorize that, if conditions are right, the power might have unforeseen and potentially adverse effects on the area.

The ritual takes the form of a complex song, which must be sung in harmony by all 11 casters, each voicing his or her own passage. The casters must stand on the six points and five of the six intersections of a six-pointed star, with the artifact resting at the sixth point of intersection. The ritual must be performed in some place of power, such as a region greatly infused or associated with the essence a titan or a god.

During the course of the song, one of the singers must spill the blood of a creature closely associated with the god or titan whose worshippers created the relic. The relic must be bathed in this creature's blood before the body of the sacrifice has cooled. The relic must also be bathed in the nothing less than the blood of a god or a titan during the ritual. (In this case, any god or titan will

do; it need not be one specifically associated with the artifact.)

All the above must be accomplished within the first three hours of the ritual. For the remaining two hours, the casters need merely continue their song. Because some passages and verses are longer than others, not all casters need be present for the entire ritual. They must all start together, but two of the 11 will be finished (and can thus leave without adversely affecting the ritual) after three hours have passed, and two more may leave after the fourth hour. The remaining seven must remain for the duration. If any of the necessary casters cease their singing or are interrupted for longer than a single round, the entire ritual fails.

Material Components: The blood of a sacrificial creature, as mentioned above, plus any number of herbs, substances, or objects holy to or revered by the entity whose worshippers created the artifact. (For instance, if destroying an artifact of Denev, the casters would have to possess large quantities of holly, stones, fertile soil, rare woods, and so forth.)

XP Cost: 2,000 from each caster.

Hornsaw Sentinel

The Broadreach sentinels, a troop of wardens who patrolled the forests of the Veridan Province, were originally founded during the Ledean Empire. They evolved from a simple military organization into a true brotherhood and continued to adhere to their duties despite the fall of the Ledean Empire.

In the times before the Divine War, the Broadreach sentinels helped patrol the forests of the Broadreach, defending it with the aid of the Liliandeli archers, as well as the warriors of the now-vanished Clan Unicorn. The Broadreach sentinels were a proud brotherhood of rangers and woodsmen, willing to sacrifice everything to keep their protectorate safe from those who might despoil it.

The sentinels held the unicorn to be the soul of the forest and were dedicated to defending that creature to the utmost of their ability. It was a death sentence to be a slayer of Broadreach unicorns, for even if the villain managed to get away with the deed, the sentinels would track him to the ends of the earth and make him pay for the affront.

Unfortunately, they were not able to sacrifice enough.

Mormo's destruction warped the Broadreach, and most of the sentinels died horribly in the battles that finally slew her. Many others were caught in the resultant wave of titanic ichor and found themselves strangely mutated and twisted. Several of them killed themselves rather than allow the taint of Mormo to continue on in them.

In the end, only one survived. Elitoran, a junior member of the Sentinels, was not in the forests when they were warped and transformed. He returned as soon as he heard of Mormo's destruction and found his beloved forests horribly twisted. He collapsed in despair at the roots of a tree he had grown up climbing and wept.

He awoke hours later to find himself surrounded by a trio of unicorns, badly wounded from the war. One of them was pregnant and in labor, and the unicorn that was born was strange and different. The mother died giving birth to it, torn from



Hornsaw Sentinel

Class Level	Base Attack Bonus	Fort Save	Ref Save	Will Save	Special	Spells per Day
1st	+1	+2	+0	+0	Unicorn companion	+1 level of ranger class
2nd	+2	+3	+0	+0	Hornsaw blade (+1), Hornsaw proficiency	+1 level of ranger class
3rd	+3	+3	+1	+1	Favored enemy	+1 level of ranger class
4th	+4	+4	+1	+1	Hornsaw blade (+2)	+1 level of ranger class
5th	+5	+4	+1	+1	Improved <i>magic fang</i> ; Lightning Reflexes	+1 level of ranger class
6th	+6	+5	+2	+2	Favored enemy, Hornsaw Blade (+3)	+1 level of ranger class
7th	+7	+5	+2	+2	Venomous blade	+1 level of ranger class
8th	+8	+6	+2	+2	Hornsaw blade (+4)	+1 level of ranger class
9th	+9	+6	+3	+3	Favored enemy	+1 level of ranger class
10th	+10	+7	+3	+3	Hornsaw blade (+5)	+1 level of ranger class

within, and the other two unicorns panicked and fled when they scented the foal.

Elitoran was unsure what to do with it, so he cared for it and marveled as it grew strong and powerful, equipped with a wicked serrated horn and sharp hooves and fangs to defend itself against the forest's dangers. His solitude and grief eventually drove him mad, and he came to believe that, while the nature of the forest had certainly changed, he yet had oaths to maintain. So, he continued his guardianship of this new forest, soon dubbed the Hornsaw.

Today, the Hornsaw sentinels are a brotherhood of wicked rangers who guard the Hornsaw as fervently as their previous incarnation guarded the Broadreach. They will gladly give their lives to prevent anyone from changing the Hornsaw; they believe that the "taint" was actually the vast forest's true destiny, unlocked by the touch of Mormo. Though they rarely worship Mormo *per se*, many certainly do ally themselves with her servants. Just as many, however, see Mormo's touch as merely the catalyst for change and hold Mormo's servants in disdain, for their activities often threaten the health of the Hornsaw as well.

Hornsaw sentinels are usually bitterest enemies with both Renewers and the Liliandeli.

Hit Die: d10.

Requirements

To qualify to become a Hornsaw sentinel (Hsn), a character must fulfill all the following criteria:

Alignment: Any non-lawful, non-good.

Base Attack Bonus: +4.

Feats: Alertness, Track, Weapon Focus (scimitar).

Skill: Knowledge (local: Hornsaw) 3 ranks, Wilderness Lore 9 ranks.

Spellcasting: The ability to cast *magic fang* using titanic magic (ranger or druid).

Class Skills

The Hornsaw sentinel's class skills (and the key ability for each skill) are Animal Empathy (Cha, exclusive skill), Climb (Str), Concentration (Con), Craft (Int), Handle Animal (Cha), Heal (Wis), Hide (Dex), Intimidate (Cha), Intuit Direction (Wis), Jump (Str), Knowledge (local), Knowledge (nature) (Int), Listen (Wis), Move Silently (Dex), Profession (Wis), Ride (Dex), Search (Int), Sense Motive (Wis), Spellcraft (Int), Spot (Wis), Swim (Str), and Wilderness Lore (Wis).

Skill Points at Each Level: 4 + Int modifier.

Class Features

All of the following are class features of the Hornsaw sentinel prestige class.

Weapon and Armor Proficiency: Hornsaw sentinels are proficient with simple and martial weapons and light armor. Note that armor check penalties for armor heavier than leather apply to the skills Balance, Climb, Escape Artist, Hide, Jump, Move Silently, Pick Pocket, and Tumble. Also, Swim checks suffer a -1 penalty for every 5 pounds of armor and equipment carried.

Spells per Day: Hornsaw sentinels continue to advance in ranger spellcasting ability. When a new Hornsaw sentinel level is gained, the character gains new spells per day as if he had also gained

Hornsaw Unicorn Companion

The Hornsaw unicorn that comes to the Hornsaw sentinel retains its independent thought and will. Though some sentinels do mercilessly dominate these unicorns (and some sentinels are themselves mastered by particularly cunning and vicious Hornsaw unicorn companions), the bond is a close one and tends to create alliances between the sentinel and unicorn. Rarely if ever are these companions used as mounts, save in the direst of emergencies.

a level in ranger. He does not, however, gain any other benefit a character of that class would have acquired. This essentially means that he adds the level of Hornsaw sentinel to the level of ranger,

then determines spells per day and caster level accordingly.

Unicorn Companion: The Hornsaw sentinel attracts a Hornsaw unicorn companion. Though it will occasionally permit the sentinel to ride it, the beast is not a mount. See the “Hornsaw Unicorn Companion” sidebar for more details.

Hornsaw Blade: At 2nd level, the Hornsaw sentinel’s companion leads him to a secret site where generations of Hornsaw unicorns have come to die. There, he is guided through the sacred process of harvesting two of their curved, serrated alicorns for the purpose of crafting Hornsaw blade scimitars. The process of actually sanctifying the alicorns takes a full month, though it need not be performed at the “unicorn graveyard”; many Hornsaw sentinels harvest the alicorns and then return to their lairs to work on the blades. In the Hornsaw, the most common place for this activity is Alicorn Vale, though of course there are many

Hornsaw Unicorn Companion

Hornsaw Sentinel Level	Bonus HD	Special Ability
1–2	+1 HD	Empathic link, improved evasion, share saving throws, share spells
3–4	+2 HD	Track, sensitivity
5–6	+3 HD	Share resistance
7–8	+4 HD	Bond of rage, unerring tracking
9–10	+5 HD	Share immunity

Bonus HD: As the sentinel increases in class level, his Hornsaw unicorn companion gains HD as specified on the table above.

Empathic Link: The sentinel has an empathic link with his Hornsaw unicorn companion out to a distance of 1 mile, or 2 miles within the Hornsaw Forest. The sentinel cannot see through the companion’s eyes, but the two of them can communicate telepathically. This is a supernatural ability.

Because of the empathic link between the companion and the sentinel, the sentinel has the same connection to an item or place that the companion does. For instance, if his companion has seen a room, the sentinel can teleport into that room as if he also has seen it (assuming he has the ability to do so, of course).

Improved Evasion: If the companion is subject to an attack that normally allows a Reflex saving throw for half damage, it takes no damage if it makes the saving throw and half damage even if the saving throw fails.

Share Saving Throws: At the sentinel’s option, any saving throw that he makes can also affect his unicorn companion as if it had rolled the same number. The companion must be within 5 feet of the companion at the time, and the decision to share a saving throw must be made before the die is rolled.

Share Spells: At the sentinel’s option, he may have any spell he casts on himself also affect his companion. The companion must be touching the sentinel at the time. As is not the case with familiars, however, if the spell has a duration other than instantaneous, the spell does *not* end if the familiar moves more than 5 feet away. The sentinel and companion may share spells even if the spells normally do not affect creatures of the companion’s type (magical beast).

Track: The companion receives the Track feat and, when tracking, it gains a racial bonus to Wilderness Lore equal to its HD. Most of the time, the sentinel’s total bonus is still better, so Hornsaw unicorn companions often prefer to use the Aid Another action to augment the sentinel’s Wilderness Lore check rather than make one of their own.

Sensitivity: While within the Hornsaw Forest, both the Hornsaw unicorn and the Hornsaw sentinel receive a +4 insight bonus to all Listen, Search, and Spot checks, as well as to all Wilderness Lore checks made while tracking.

Share Resistance: The Hornsaw sentinel gains a +4 bonus to saves against poisons and diseases. In addition, he ignores the first 2 points of ability damage from poisons and diseases to which he does succumb.

Bond of Rage: The Hornsaw unicorn may use its rage whenever the sentinel to whom it is bonded is wounded. The unicorn will never harm the sentinel to whom it is bonded during its rages.

Unerring Tracking: The sentinel may always take 20 on Wilderness Lore checks used to track his Hornsaw unicorn companion; the companion may do likewise when tracking the sentinel. Should either the Hornsaw sentinel or the Hornsaw unicorn ever be killed, the other may always take 20 when tracking the killers.

Share Immunity: The Hornsaw sentinel gains immunity to poisons and disease.

other places where smaller groups of unicorns have fallen.

Once the process is completed, the alicorns are considered to be masterwork scimitars; they have a hardness of 13 and 6 hp.

The process of sanctification also grants one of the blades an enhancement bonus or special weapon enhancement. At 2nd level, this bonus is +1. At every other level, this increases by an additional +1 until the total bonus reaches +5 at 10th level. These bonuses may apply to a single blade, or may be divided between the twin Hornsaw blades wielded by the sentinel.

Each time the bonus increases, the sentinel must perform again the sanctification ritual. During this time, the bonuses may be shifted about. For instance, upon achieving 6th level (+3 total bonus), a sentinel that had previously invested a +1 bonus in each of his blades may now transform one of his blades into a +2 keen weapon, leaving the other a masterwork item.

Items enhanced in this fashion are treated as magical only for the Hornsaw sentinel who created them; any other who uses the items does so as though they were merely masterwork weapons. Further, the weapons enhanced in this fashion may not be enhanced through normal item creation feats; if this occurs, the item forever loses its qualities granted through this class.

Hornsaw Proficiency: At 2nd level, the Hornsaw sentinel's paired Hornsaw alicorn scimitars are treated as though they were both light weapons for the purpose of his ranger fighting ability. This ability is only gained by sentinels of Medium-size or larger.

Favored Enemy: At 3rd level, the Hornsaw sentinel may choose an additional favored enemy, adding to any favored enemies granted by the ranger or other classes. This is treated as the ranger special ability in all aspects, save that the sentinel must choose an enemy that somehow has to do with his guardianship of the Hornsaw forest. The Hornsaw sentinel gains additional favored enemies at 6th and 9th level.

Each time the sentinel gains this ability, all previous favored enemy bonuses increase by +1 as well. Thus, for instance, a 6th-level ranger/3rd-level Hornsaw sentinel has three favored enemies, one having a +3 bonus, one +2, and this, the latest, +1; likewise, a 10th-level ranger/6th-level Hornsaw sentinel has five favored enemies, with bonuses of +5/+4/+3/+2/+1 respectively.

Improved Magic Fang: At 5th level, the Hornsaw sentinel's use of the *magic fang* and *greater magic fang* spells improves. When casting such spells on his Hornsaw unicorn companion, the bonus is increased by an additional +1, and further, for the purpose of these spells, his caster level is considered to be his total ranger level plus his Hornsaw sentinel level.

Lightning Reflexes: At 5th level, the Hornsaw sentinel gains the Lightning Reflexes feat.

Venomous Blade: At 7th level, the Hornsaw sentinel gains the ability to imbue his blade with a virulent venom. This venom is made by spreading some mud from the rich loam of the Hornsaw forest and the sentinel allowing his own blood to drip over it. If the sentinel is unwounded, this is a full-round action and deals 1 point of damage to the sentinel; if he has taken wounds and has some of the loam at hand (either at his feet or from a pouch at his belt), it may be done as a move-equivalent action and deals no damage. In neither case does it provoke an attack of opportunity.

This poison causes severe loss of muscle control and eventual erosion of health to those it affects.

Injury: Fort DC 10 + the Hornsaw sentinel's class level + the sentinel's Constitution modifier; **Initial Damage:** 1d3 temporary Strength + 1d3 temporary Dexterity; **Secondary Damage:** 1d6 temporary Constitution.

The poison may be created a number of times per day equal to 1 + the Hornsaw sentinel's Constitution modifier (minimum 1/day).

In addition, when applying poison to his Hornsaw blades, a sentinel does not suffer the usual 5% chance of accidentally poisoning himself.

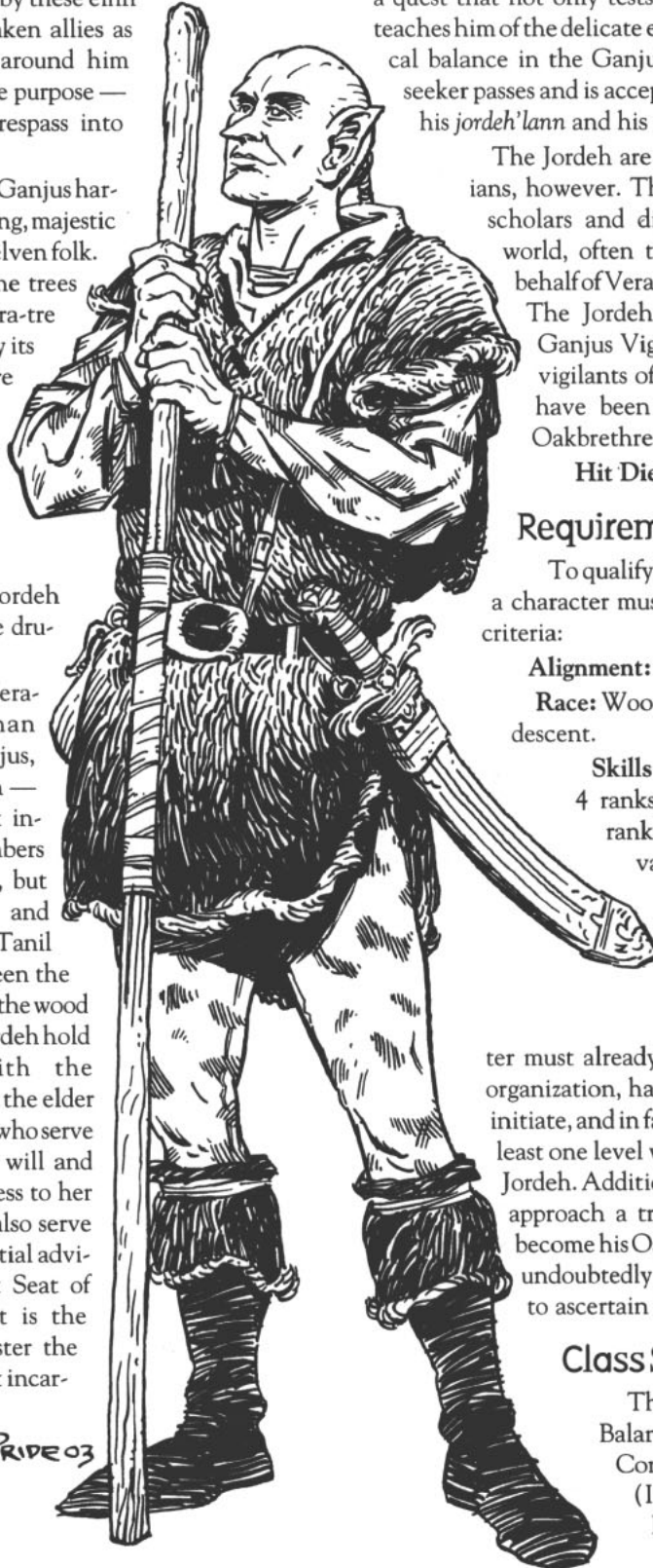
Jordeh

Of the many tales told of the Ganjus, probably the most prevalent are of the so-called “tree ghosts,” mysterious figures that fade in and out of sight among the oaks of that mighty forest. More than one would-be invader has found himself suddenly surrounded by these elfin “spirits” and their oaken allies as the very woodland around him comes to life with one purpose — to prevent further trespass into the sacred Ganjus.

The depths of the Ganjus harbor Vera-tre, the soaring, majestic tree city of the wood elfen folk. A city grown from the trees rather than built, Vera-tre is jealously guarded by its people, for there are many forces in the Scarred Lands that seek to destroy this bastion of Denev’s worship. Foremost among the tree-city’s guardians are the Jordeh (“Oakbrother” in the druidic tongue).

The Jordeh of Vera-tre are more than guardians of the Ganjus, however. The Jordeh — an organization that includes not just members of this prestige class, but also druids, rangers, and even the rare cleric of Tanil — are the link between the spirit of the forest and the wood elfen people. The Jordeh hold close council with the Coventacle of Trees, the elder treants of the Ganjus who serve Denev, relaying the will and advice of their mistress to her people. The Jordeh also serve their people as impartial advisors to the Verdant Seat of Vera-tre. Indeed, it is the Jordeh who administer the tests to find the latest incarnations of the Four Eldest Beasts.

PRIDE03



The druid or ranger who would know the secrets of the Oakbrothers must seek out a patron among the treants of the Ganjus who is willing to teach him the secrets of the Jordeh. The treant mentor, usually referred to as Oakbrother, then grants the candidate a quest that not only tests his worthiness, but also teaches him of the delicate ecological and metaphysical balance in the Ganjus that they serve. If the seeker passes and is accepted, the treant gives him his *jordeh'lann* and his training begins.

The Jordeh are not merely forest guardians, however. They serve their people as scholars and diplomats to the outside world, often travelling extensively on behalf of Vera-tre and the Verdant Seat. The Jordeh work closely with the Ganjus Vigil; indeed, several of the vigilants of that Vigil are known to have been accepted by treants as Oakbrethren.

Hit Die: d8.

Requirements

To qualify to become a Jordeh (Jor), a character must fulfill all the following criteria:

Alignment: Any neutral.

Race: Wood elf or half-elf of wood elf descent.

Skills: Diplomacy 4 ranks, Hide 4 ranks, Knowledge (nature) 9 ranks, Speak Language (Sylvan, Treant).

Spellcasting: Ability to cast 2nd-level divine spells, including *speak with plants*.

Special: The character must already be a part of the Jordeh organization, having been accepted as an initiate, and in fact must have advanced at least one level while in the service of the Jordeh. Additionally, the character must approach a treant and request that it become his Oakbrother. The treant will undoubtedly test the character in order to ascertain his worthiness.

Class Skills

The Jordeh’s class skills are Balance (Dex), Climb (Str), Concentration (Con), Craft (Int), Diplomacy (Cha), Heal (Wis), Hide (Dex),

Intuit Direction (Wis), Jump (Str), Knowledge (nature) (Int), Listen (Wis), Move Silently (Dex), Ritual Casting (Con, exclusive skill), Scry (Int, exclusive skill), Sense Motive (Wis), Spellcraft (Int), Wilderness Lore (Wis).

Skill Points at Each Level: 4 + Int modifier.

Class Features

All of the following are class features of the Jordeh prestige class.

Weapon and Armor Proficiency: The Jordeh is required to adhere to the weapon and armor limitations of druids, though an elven Jordeh may add the weapon proficiencies he gains from being an elf to those accepted under his oaths.

Spells per Day: Jordeh continue to advance in spellcasting ability. When a new Jordeh level is gained, the character gains new spells per day as if he had also gained a level in a spellcasting class he belonged to before he added the prestige class. He does not, however, gain any other benefit a character of that class would have gained (improved chance of controlling or rebuking undead, metamagic or item creation feats, and so on). Essentially, he adds the level of Jordeh to the level of some other spellcasting class he has, then determines spells per day and caster level accordingly. If the character had more than one spellcasting class before he became a Jordeh, he must decide to which class he adds each level of Jordeh for purposes of determining spells per day when he gains the new level.

Child of the Oak: At 1st level the Jordeh is named an Oakbrother and accepted as a student and friend by a treant, allowing him to call upon the treant for its aid and knowledge, assuming that such is to the benefit of the Ganjus as a whole. In doing so, the treant gives the Jordeh a staff, called a *jordeh'lann*, crafted from itself as part of that bond. This staff is considered a masterwork quarterstaff and may be enchanted (though it bears no magic when first given to the Jordeh).

When this staff is used as the focus for a *shillelagh* spell, the duration of that spell extends to 10 minutes/level and the staff is considered a +2 weapon. Additionally, if used as the focus for *spellstaff*, it may hold either a single spell (as normal for the spell), or a number of spells whose combined spell levels equal that of the caster's Jordeh class level, maximum. This staff may be replaced if destroyed, but not until the Jordeh has redeemed himself in the eyes of his Oakbrother.

The treant also teaches the Jordeh how best to use the sheltering boughs of the oak. This grants him a +10 competence bonus to all Climb, Jump, Hide, and Move Silently checks that involve an oak, be it

hiding in the tree's shadow, scaling its boughs, or leaping silently among its branches.

Jordeh whose Oakbrothers die are bereft of the power of the Ganjus, oaken majesty, walking the Oaken Path, and sylvan spirit powers and qualities of this prestige class until he finds another treant willing to accept him as Oakbrother. This is rarely difficult to do, especially if the Jordeh did everything in his power to preserve the life of his Oakbrother, but there are tales of those who have been rejected and left to live a solitary, melancholy existence, bereft of the spiritual connection they once knew.

Power of the Ganjus: Part of a Jordeh's learning involves learning to tap into the ambient power of Denev's favored forest. While within the Ganjus forest, the Jordeh adds a +1 to the spell save DC of all divine spells he casts. This increases to +2 at 4th level, +3 at 7th level, and +4 at 9th level.

Whispers in the Leaves: At 2nd level the Jordeh learns to listen to the whispers in the leaves around him, which often echo what transpires elsewhere as the trees whisper from one to another throughout a forest. This grants the Jordeh a +5 competence bonus to Listen rolls when in a forest or heavily wooded area, as the leaves echo even the tiniest sounds that he might ordinarily miss.

This also allows the Jordeh to whisper a message to the trees and have them carry it to anyone else within the same forest who also has the whispers in the leaves ability (including any treant), allowing the Jordeh to communicate with one another anywhere in the Ganjus. Distant wood elven settlements often stay in contact with one another thanks to their resident Jordeh. The Jordeh has no way of knowing whether or not his target is in the forest through this method — he can only whisper his message and hope that the trees are able to deliver it to him. This is a supernatural ability that can be used a number of times per day equal to 1 + the Charisma bonus of the Jordeh (minimum of once per day). There is no limit to the number of times per day he may receive such messages.

Oaken Resilience: At 2nd level the Jordeh begins to take on a tougher, darker skin, granting him a +1 natural armor bonus to AC. This bonus continues to increase as the Jordeh rises in level, becoming +2 at 5th level and +3 at 8th level. The skin of the Jordeh darkens as this power advances until it is a rich wooden hue at 8th level.

Tap the Roots: At 3rd level the Jordeh learns to tap the powerful energies of life found in the oak in order to speed the healing process of himself or others. The wounded character smears the recipient's wounds with sap from an oak and the being then sleeps beneath or in the tree. This doubles the normal healing processes, allowing the one so treated to heal double his character level in hit points with a simple

The Jordeh

Class Level	Base Attack Bonus	Fort Save	Ref Save	Will Save	Special	Spells per Day
1st	+0	+2	+0	+2	Child of the Oak, power of the Ganjus +1	+1 level of existing class
2nd	+1	+3	+0	+3	Whispers in the leaves, oaken resilience +1	+1 level of existing class
3rd	+2	+3	+1	+3	Tap the roots	+1 level of existing class
4th	+3	+4	+1	+4	Oaken majesty, power of the Ganjus +2	+1 level of existing class
5th	+3	+4	+1	+4	Oaken resilience +2	+1 level of existing class
6th	+4	+5	+2	+5	Sylvan tongue	+1 level of existing class
7th	+5	+5	+2	+5	Walking the Oaken Path, power of the Ganjus +3	+1 level of existing class
8th	+6	+6	+2	+6	Oaken resilience +3	+1 level of existing class
9th	+6	+6	+3	+6	Power of the Ganjus +4	+1 level of existing class
10th	+7	+7	+3	+7	Sylvan spirit	+1 level of existing class

night's sleep, or to heal quadruple his character level in hit points as well as 2 points of ability damage per full day of rest. The Jordeh can only tend to one being at a time in this fashion, himself included.

Oaken Majesty: The oak has often been called the King of Trees. At 4th level the Jordeh draws upon his learning to rebuke or command plant creatures. This ability operates as the granted ability for the clerical Plant domain in all ways. If the character already has this ability, oaken majesty doubles the number of times per day he may use it.

Sylvan Tongue: At 6th level the Jordeh learns the language of plants. He may cast *speaking with plants* spontaneously by sacrificing 3 or more levels of spells. Note that these levels do not all have to come from the same spell — he may sacrifice multiple lower level spells in order to gain the 3 spell levels needed. Additionally, any time the Jordeh casts *speaking with plants* by the Jordeh, even from a magic item, it lasts 10 minutes/level and the plant is considered to be friendly. Plants are still limited by their normal abilities and understanding, but are more likely to be able to communicate fully, as the Jordeh understands the plants' level of communication on the plants' own terms, rather than using the spell to force them to his (as is normal).

Walking the Oaken Path: At 7th level the Jordeh learns to become one with the oak, merging with it and transporting himself along the mystic ties that bind all oaks. He may cast *tree stride* spontaneously by sacrificing 5 or more levels of spells. Note that these levels do not all have to come from the same spell — he may sacrifice multiple lower level spells in order to gain the 5 spell levels needed. Additionally, the Jordeh may elect to nominate his Oakbrother treant as one of the trees in this jump, regardless of the distance, as long as they are currently located within the same forest.

Sylvan Spirit: At 10th level the character becomes one of the High Jordeh, achieving transcendence by way of the oaks and joining with his Oakbrother on a soul-deep level. In game terms, the Jordeh's creature type becomes "fey." Like a dryad to her oak, the High Jordeh is bound to his Oakbrother treant. Damage taken by one is felt (but the points of damage are not suffered) by the other. If one dies, the other must make a Fortitude save (DC 25) or likewise die.

Further, the Jordeh is able to cast *tree shape* as a spell-like ability at will. Additionally, he may cast *liveoak* spontaneously by sacrificing 6 or more levels of spells. Note that these levels do not all have to come from the same spell — he may sacrifice multiple lower level spells in order to gain the 6 spell levels needed.

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